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The Lion of the Sea;

OR,

The Vailed Lady of San Tropez.

A WEIRD, WILD TALE OF THE OLDEN TIME,
WHEN THE ALGERINE PIRATES SWEEP THE
SOUTHERN SEA AND BOLDLY DEFIED
ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH.

BY COLONEL DELLE SARA.

CHAPTER I.
THE LUGGER.

"What wild and wandering men are these?"
—OLD PLAY.

BLUE are the waters of the Mediterranean,
fairest of all the Southern Seas; and richer are

its tides in stories of romance than all the rest
of the waters of Europe combined.

And of the Mediterranean we write—of that
beautiful sea as it was in the year 1653 when on
its southern line it washed upon the territory
of as merciless a horde of corsairs as this world
has ever known.

It is of the Algerines we speak, the Algerines
of Algiers, the fierce and turbaned Moors, ruled
over by a Dey who claimed direct descent from
the far-famed pirates of the olden time, the
Brothers Barbarossa, who, invited by the peo-
ple of the coast, craving for rulers who depend-
ed upon the strong hand rather than on the
might of right, seized upon the throne of Al-
giers.

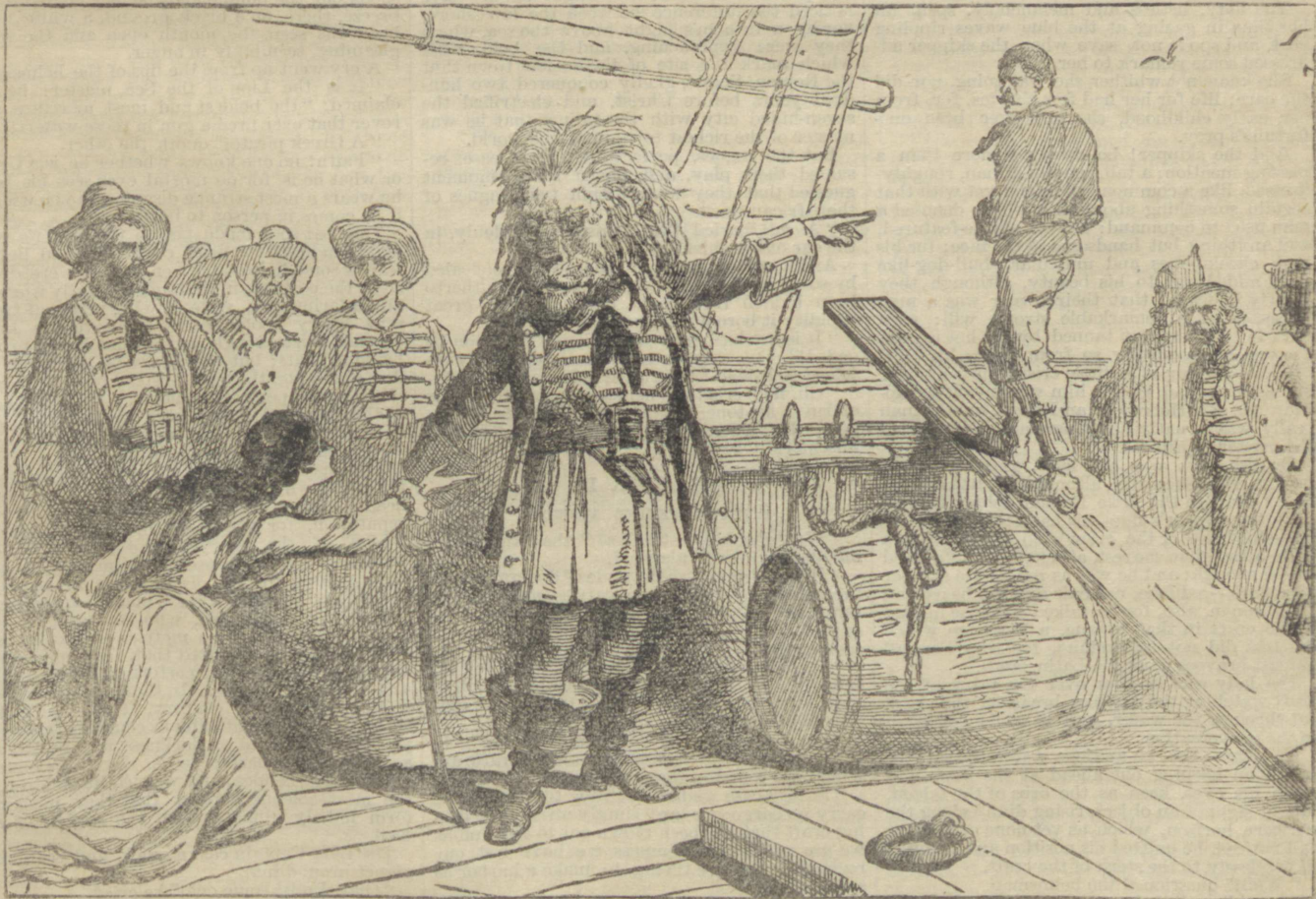
And these pirate brothers became lords of
that land, and their descendants ruled after
them as Deys, nominally subject to Turkey, but
in reality utterly independent.

In 1653 the Dey was called Aboo Hassan, a
proud, arrogant tyrant who believed himself to
be master of as great a kingdom as though he
could boast that on his dominions the sun never
set.

And this jackdaw of a sovereign—this little
head of a nest of sea-robbers of the worst type,
dared to levy war upon any ship that spread its
white sails on the blue waters of the Mediter-
ranean, no matter what flag she carried.

All was fish that came to the net of these
ruthless sea-rovers whether the vessel displayed
at her peak the keys and castle of old Spain, the
Italian colors of Leghorn, Genoa or Naples, or
even the almost-universally-respected lilies of
France or the St. George's Cross of England.

It seemed strange that these powerful nations
should submit to such outrages at the hands of
these merciless rogues, but they did so for many
years, and even paid black-mail to the "ma-



FOR THE LOVE OF HEAVEN, NOBLE SIR, STAIN NOT YOUR SOUL WITH THIS DEED OF HORROR!" SHE CRIED, IN ACCENTS WILD.

nificent" Dey, in the shape of ransom for their captive subjects, or to buy protection for their flag; and so daring had these sea-brigands become at the time of which we write that hardly a ship, other than a man-of-war, no matter what flag she carried, dared to attempt to navigate the Mediterranean without being prepared to pay ransom, or else, being well armed, to fight a passage through.

Matters being in this state, it was strange that a small, two-masted lugger, little more than a fishing-boat, illy manned, not armed at all, sailing due south, skirting Minorca's isle, leaving Majorca's high cliffs far behind, should boldly steer straight for the African shore!

A mean contemptible-looking boat, manned by a most handog appearing crew, few in numbers, as we have said, but all ill-favored rascals as ever looked through a pair of stocks, or had been whipped at the cart's tail; and yet, that ugly craft, that plowed her way through the curling waves of the placid sea as if it were a country bumpkin essaying to roll through the measures of a court dance, carried a cargo precious in the sight of men's eyes.

A precious cargo, although not a pound of freight was there on board, nor yet an ounce of gold, save what the skipper and the villainous crew carried in the capacious pockets of their bag-leg trousers.

The precious article was a woman, a young and shapely girl—with that graceful bearing and elegant contour that mankind at large fully believes can only come with "gentle" blood.

She was closely veiled—so carefully, that not the slightest traces of her features could be seen, and yet there was not a man on board of the craft who would not have willingly sworn that the veiled lady was as fair as one of the bright-eyed beauties that in the impostor's paradise wait to receive the true believers and conduct them, after the dark passage of the grave, to the realms of eternal bliss.

The veiled lady of San Tropez, so the crew had named her, and so too the inhabitants of the little fishing town on the southern coast of France had termed her while she resided there, it was from the little French hamlet that the lady came, not from the far-off isle of San Tropez, low down in the Southern Seas.

Straight from the French coast to the southern African land the craft had laid her course.

The lady, listless and melancholy, spent all her time in gazing at the blue waves rippling past, and spoke not, save when the skipper addressed some remark to her.

She knew not whither she was going, nor did she care; life for her had few charms, for, from her early childhood, she had ever been misfortune's prey.

And the skipper! he deserves more than a passing mention; a tall, muscular man, roughly-dressed, like a common sailor, and yet with that certain something about him which denoted a man used to command; he was coarse-featured, and anything but handsome in the face; for his high cheek-bones and muscular, bull-dog-like jaw added not to his beauty, although they clearly indicated that their owner was a man possessed of a remarkable strong will; very dark in the face, not tanned by the hot rays of the sun, but naturally so from birth, his hair, black as jet, curled in little crisp curls all over his massive head, giving him very much the appearance of a Hebrew or an Italian, but the man really was a native of England's island, then the master of Europe.

English, too, was the lady, as was clearly proven when she spoke, although she had resided many years in the little French fishing village.

By the skipper's side—his hand was on the tiller—stood one of the crew who seemed to be a little better than the rest, although an ill-favored rascal enough; and he was as red as the skipper was black—red face, red hair and red beard; an Englishman, also, for he talked with the master of the craft in that tongue, a language which the rest did not understand, for they were all outcast bravos from the Latin lands.

The lady was leaning over the prow of the craft watching the bubbles break as the vessel cut through the water, and so could not listen to the conversation.

An eager—yea, an anxious watch the skipper had been keeping out ahead at the bow, and when his eyes, keen as the orbs of the falcon, caught sight of an object, rising dimly along the southern horizon, which as yet none of the rest had noticed, he quitted his position and sauntered carelessly to the stern of the craft.

"Well?" questioned the helmsman.

"Land," replied the other, laconically.

"And no sail?"

"No sail."

"That is strange!"

"Yes, they should have overhauled us an hour ago."

"What does it mean?"

"I know not; some misunderstanding, I presume; perhaps they did not weigh anchor in time, or the wind may have failed them."

"It is a good wind."

"For us, yes, and should be so for them."

"These vermin do not suspect," and as he spoke the speaker glanced carelessly at the crew, four men in all, now congregated in a knot by the foremast, throwing dice and jabbering furiously.

"Oh, no, why should they? Not one of them is a navigator. How can they tell that I have put the helm about and that we are steering south instead of west?"

"And the lady?"

"She is as listless as a woman made of wax; she came without a word, she knows not whither she is going, nor does she seem to care."

"Women are strange animals," exclaimed the other, with a very expressive shrug of the shoulders. "What will they do with these fellows when they get them?"

"Food, for powder," replied the other, contemptuously; "these beggars will stop a cannon-ball or dull the edge of a cutlass as well as better men. Ali, Pasha Bluebeard, will be glad to get them; the bigger the rascal the better he likes him. He says that no man will fight better than the rogue who knows that he will be hanged if he is captured."

Just then one of the gamblers lifted his head, glanced around him, and, happening to be a sharp-sighted scamp, noticed the dim, dull gray line rising slowly out of the water.

"Ah, land!" he cried, calling the attention of his comrades to the sight.

"Yes, land!" they all shouted, gleefully. In truth, these "land-sailors" had been counting the hours for some time, which, perforce, must intervene between their own precious selves and the ever welcome shore where red wine could be got, money could be won, and there were fat purses to be lifted.

"Cartagena!" the skipper exclaimed.

And the rogues looked at each other with great glee, and repeated the name of the far-famed Spanish city; but, had they not been dull-pated scoundrels, they might at once have noticed the difference between the low shore, hardly a fathom's high above the sea, which they were approaching, and the bold cliffs which mark the site of the ancient town that the Roman, Scipio, gladly conquered two hundred years before Christ, and electrified the seven-hilled city with the tidings that he was master of the richest town in all the world.

But the rogues, perfectly at their ease, resumed their play, and never for a moment guessed that they were within two leagues of the African coast.

"A sail!" cried the helmsman, suddenly, in the ear of his chief.

And a sail, sure enough, there was; concealed by some projection on the coast, it had hitherto been hidden from sight, but now, with great rapidity it bore down upon the lugger.

"It is my lord, and our mission will soon be ended!" the skipper exclaimed, evidently rejoiced to behold the strange sail.

"Oh, no!" cried the helmsman, and there was alarm in his tone. "It is not the craft we expect. It is a stranger! Upon my life it means mischief!"

CHAPTER II.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

"Why should you think so?" the skipper demanded, evidently alarmed.

"Do you not notice the style of the craft? See the spread of canvas she carries, and how she forges through the water. It is not the one we expect, and what honest merchant vessel carries such spars?"

"She is too small for a man-of-war, yet big enough to fight one, and good sailer enough to show a foe a clean pair of heels if she were getting the worst of an encounter."

"By Heaven! I'll wager a hundred gold pieces that it is a Greek pirate! Such crafts are sometimes found in these waters."

"In that case we have nothing to fear, for we carry no cargo; we are simply an honest fishing-craft that has been blown out to sea, and as we are without a compass we have lost our reckoning, and are trying to make a harbor as soon as possible."

"But the lady?" asked the other, significantly.

"We must conceal her below; it is not likely that we will be searched when they discover who and what we are."

Then the skipper went forward, and explaining his fears to the lady, conducted her below.

The unknown craft came up, hand-over-hand, as the saying is, and the sailors, noticing her at last, sought the bulwarks and speculated vigorously in regard to her.

One conclusion was reached by all, and that was that she was no honest craft.

Twenty minutes more and she came so near that her decks could be plainly distinguished, crowded with men—armed men, too, for the glint of the sun on the steel of the weapons could readily be seen.

Nor was the craft less favored than the men who manned her, for a couple of brass pieces peeped out of her forward ports, bow-chasers, and a ponderous iron piece, amidships, showed its ugly muzzle as the gunner threw off the canvas which had covered it. This piece of ordnance, thus mounted, in after years came to be known as the long Tom of the "low, black" pirate schooners, and of the hardy Yankee privateers.

A single shot the stranger fired as a signal for the lugger to leave to—no empty menace in the shape of a blank cartridge, but a well-aimed solid ball that went skipping playfully over the waves only a yard or two ahead of the lugger's bow.

The crew of the little craft understood the meaning of the signal well enough, and, without waiting for orders, thoroughly frightened, they slipped, jabbering like so many monkeys, to the ropes, and down came the sails on a run.

The lugger lost her headway almost immediately, and lay like a log on the surface of the wave.

The stranger shot by them, and as she did so lowered a boat with that prompt alacrity and ready skill which so clearly told of practiced seamanship, and at the same instant a ball of bunting went up to the stranger's peak; she had previously displayed no colors.

Every eye on board the lugger was fixed on the ball of bunting, for it was black, and not a soul there, but expected to see there displayed the Death's Head and Cross-bones, ever the pirate's favorite device from time immemorial; but they were disappointed, for when the wind shook out the bundle and the flag floated to the breeze, there, on a black ground, a white lion's head was seen, the mouth open and the tusks gleaming, seemingly in anger.

A cry went up from the lips of the helmsman. "It is the Lion of the Sea, master!" he exclaimed; "the boldest and most merciless searover that ever fired a gun in these waters!"

"A Greek pirate?" quoth the other.

"Faith! no one knows whether he is a Greek or what he is, for no mortal ever sees his face; he wears a most strange disguise, as you will see if he comes in person to board us."

The boat soon made fast to the lugger's side, and then up to the deck, cutlass in hand, lightly leaped some half-dozen men. They were dressed in the costume in that generally worn by all seafaring men, wide, flowing petticoat trousers, heavy boots, reaching above the knee, checked shirts, rough jackets and heavy broad-brimmed hats; but the leader of the band, the first man upon the deck instead of a hat wore a lion's head upon his shoulders; a veritable head of the grim and fawaring of the hot African desert, and this astonishing head gave the wearer the strangest appearance possible.

The superstitious crew shrank in terror from the unknown who sported such a fantastical head-covering. He was no stranger to them by reputation, for the deeds, or misdeeds, of the "Lion of the Sea," as the master of the strange craft was pleased to term himself, had been recited to wondering ears in many a tongue and in many a land, and rumor gave out that the daring blade, who so strangely disguised his person, was more than mortal, and that it must be admitted that, for a mere man, the Lion Captain had performed some fearful and wonderful deeds. In that age, the middle of the seventeenth century, it was quite the thing to believe that humans could make a compact with the fiend of darkness, and by his aid accomplish wonderful deeds. Even the church encouraged the idea, and warned its children in the most solemn manner that they must not form unholy alliances with the Author of All Evil.

The Lion Captain cast a quick and searching glance around him.

"Oh! I miss some one!" he cried.

And at this extremely peculiar exclamation, for all on board knew that the lady had gone

below, there were pale faces among the hearers. The saying argued a supernatural knowledge.

"I crave your pardon, noble sir," said the skipper, who did not share in the superstitious feelings of the crew, but merely looked upon the lion's head as a clever device to promote mystery and so excite terror; and as he spoke he approached the stranger, cap in hand, in the most humble manner, evidently it being no easy task for him so to appear. "What does your lordship seek on board of our poor craft?"

"Who and what are ye?" asked the stranger, speaking now in the English tongue, having previously used French.

The skipper hesitated to reply; he was evidently reluctant to use his own language for some reason.

"Don't you understand English?" the Lion Captain questioned.

"A little, noble sir," the skipper responded, hesitatingly.

"Speak, then, man, and don't lie, for I'll wager my craft yonder and all she contains you first spoke English ere you learned any other tongue."

The skipper was perplexed; this Greek pirate used his mother tongue like a native.

"We are only poor fishermen, your honor, blown out of our course by contrary winds, and we are now seeking some safe harbor."

A contemptuous laugh came from the lion's head.

"And is the harbor of Algiers so safe that you run straight for it?" he demanded, now speaking in French: "are you all anxious to serve the Moor as slaves?"

"Oh, no, not Algiers!" cried one of the crew, horror-stricken.

"Oh, no!" the rest chorused. "Cartagena!"

"Algiers lies yonder, not two leagues off," and the stranger waved his hand toward the strand—the low sandy coast. "And it is a mercy that the Algerines have not swooped down upon you long ere this; but you are ahead of your time, good master skipper; you have sailed better than you calculated upon, for you are not due for an hour yet."

Despite the firm command that the dark-faced master of the lugger had over his features he was startled at the words of the Lion Captain and betrayed his uneasiness in his face.

"Aha! I reached home that thing did!" the stranger sneered. "And it is you, in truth, good Master Richard Tendrell, more commonly called Black Dick of Crofton; but what name you bear when you wear the turban of the Algerine I know not, although I have no doubt that you are as good a Moor as any of the rest of them. I did not recognize you at first, master, regarding like a common fisherman. But come! we are wasting time. You have a rich cargo aboard that will relieve you of, for fear that these dogs of Algerines may take it from you, the unchristian rascals! Produce it!"

The skipper was thunderstruck; for the stranger had named him only too correctly; and he also understood the meaning of the command.

"You are mistaken, noble sir!" he exclaimed, trying hard to dissemble. "We have but our lives, and if your honor seeks them we are at your mercy."

"Well, we'll take your life since you offer it so freely," cried the Lion Captain, with a pitiless laugh. "Prepare a plank, some of you; and you, honest English Algerine, prepare to walk it. There's room for all of you below in Dave Jones's locker, and by the beard of my grandfather, and the red lion of Ben Hamet, you shall all walk it one by one until you stink up what I seek!"

By a strange chance there was a single loose twelve-foot plank in the lugger, and this was exactly fitted so that it balanced upon the bulwark rail of the craft.

Mount and walk, good Master Tendrell! the stranger cried, pointing with his naked cut-throat toward the plank. "You should thank me for this death's-dance, an easy, painless one, and you'll cheat the hangman who, most certainly, one day would have claimed you."

The Englishman, his face now more vivid than black, stepped upon the plank and advanced half-way up the rail.

"Now, then, a step or two more and you'll solve that great mystery which has puzzled many a man's head in this busy world!"

The rest watched the scene with horror, the strangers with eager curiosity.

Then up from the little hold rushed the lady, her veil now cast aside in the agitation of the moment, and flung herself upon her knees.

"For the love of Heaven, noble sir, stain not your soul with this deed of horror!" she cried, in accents wild.

CHAPTER III.

THE MYSTERY REVEALED.

Not a soul upon the craft but looked with admiration upon the beautiful face of the girl, for she was one of those rare types of beauty that are so seldom seen; a glorious creature with great blue eyes, into which one might look day after day for years to come and yet find a new beauty each new day to reward the search; hair rich, dark-gold in hue, and as fine as finest silk that patient silk-worm ever spun; lips red as rubies, and so rich in dewy freshness that they seemed to hold within their soft confines a whole world of love; the complexion so perfect that pearls might pale with envy, and roses droop in despair, not daring to attempt to rival the handiwork that the great goddess, Nature, had lavished upon this most perfect creature.

Her form, perfection itself. In fine, nature never created—art never represented, a more exquisite woman.

And now with all the charms of her beautiful face exposed to the free gaze of these strange men—those charms that few eyes had ever looked upon, womankind alone excepted, she knelt and cried for mercy for the man doomed by the stranger to such a quick and sudden death.

"Do not fear, lady," said the Lion Captain, a most decided change in his manner now, his voice respectful, even kind. "Your boon was granted ere it was asked; your appearance saves the life of this gentleman, who is now so strangely disguised for a man of his parts. Down to your deck again, Master Tendrell, and thank this lady for your life. Ah! it is a fine recompense for your action; she has saved your life but to what fate have you decoyed her?"

The man slowly returned to his former position, a sullen look upon his dark face, and it was plain that he chafed terribly under the merciless examination of his tormentor.

"I know not what you mean, sir," he said, at last.

"Oh, you are a much ill-used man!" the other exclaimed, in mockery, "but do not attempt to trick me with a falsehood. I know more of you and of your plans, and of your master's plans too, than you think for!"

Again the skipper started and glared angrily and suspiciously at the stranger.

"Aha! I touch you on the quick again!" the Lion Captain cried. "Oh, you and this other whom you wot of, have planned shrewdly, but before you have done with me you shall find that the man who flies the lion's head from the peak of his craft has means of information somewhat superior to the rest of mankind."

Then he turned to the lady. "Can I not be of service to you, in some way?"

"No, sir; I fear not," she replied. She had risen to her feet and was surveying the strange disguise that the man wore with curiosity.

"Be not alarmed at my appearance, lady," he said, earnestly. "The lion's head bodes nothing but good to you. Heaven knows, dear lady, I wish to serve you so well that I could almost lay down the forfeit of my right hand if I could induce you to take refuge on board of my craft yonder!"

"Again I thank you for your kindness, but, perforce, I must decline your offer. I am with friends now; this gentleman has the care of me and why should I leave his protection to accept yours?"

You are near the Algerine coast, near the haunt of the worst nest of pirates that have ever existed; their armed galleys are liable to swoop out at any time, and they are brave rascals too that man them; I'll live them, that credit, although there isn't a man of them, all but what deserves the rope! This craft would fall an easy prey; but mine—well, we have teeth on board of her and they bite sometimes, bite so sharply that it would take a well-armed craft to overpower us."

I am but a simple girl and know very little of the world," the lady said slowly, "yet the little that I do know teaches me to trust to those who bring evidence that they can be trusted."

This fellow has credentials then, and I have not."

"He has, and you have not," she replied.

"Lady, if you only knew the peril which is hanging over you, and which I know only too well, you would not in your heart blame me if, by main force, I took you from the deck of this craft and placed you in safety on board of my own."

"And what is your craft, an armed vessel? To what nation do you belong?" the girl asked, suddenly.

"You speak the English language, my mother tongue, speak it like a native; you are dressed something like an English sailor, but that lion's head is not the flag of England,"

and as she spoke she pointed to the black ensign now flaunting proudly in the breeze.

"Yonder ship is called the Lion; I am her master; no nation claims her, and she sails the seas owning no master save my sole will; but of this one fact be assured, that ship fires no gun against any vessel that flies the St. George's Cross, old England's banner!"

"But, why do you take this interest in me, a stranger?" she asked, her curiosity excited.

"Ah, lady, I cannot answer that, at present; but in the future I may be able to explain. For the last time I implore you to quit this doomed craft and seek refuge on board of my snug and stanch sea-bird, as good a vessel as floats the waves this day."

"It may not be—it may not be," she repeated, listlessly; "although I go to my death, still must I go!"

"You are destined for a fate worse than death!" cried the Lion Captain, impulsively.

"Worse than death!" echoed the girl, opening her great blue eyes wide in astonishment.

"Yes, a thousand times worse to such a woman as I think you are!"

"Alas! I do not know what I am; I am not even sure of my own name!" she exclaimed, pathetically.

"What! is it as bad as that?"

"From early infancy I have been kept in ignorance in regard to my birth, and who or what I am. I know that I am called Cleora; but, what else, I know not. I know that I have a father—I have seen him twice when he visited me in San Tropez—I am going to him now at Cartagena."

"It is a foul lie, lady!" the Lion Captain exclaimed, abruptly. "You are many leagues from Cartagena, and you are not two from the city of Algiers, the nest of these accursed, dusky, turbaned pirates, the very scum of the earth!"

"I know nothing but what I am told," the lady replied, helplessly. "This gentleman brought a message from my father—his written command to come to him and to trust myself entirely to this gentleman's care. My father wrote that he is a man of broken fortunes and could not provide me with a better escort. I know my father's hand—Heaven help me! better than my father's face! What should I do but obey his written will?"

"Lady!" cried the stranger, impatiently, "I had no idea that you were so utterly ignorant of all that concerns yourself and fortunes, but you shall dwell in this doubt no longer. I know your birth and race, and what I know I will unfold to you. Your name is Cleora—Cleora Craven. You are the daughter of Thomas Craven, Earl of Crofton and Knight of Engleboro!"

"Oh! it is possible that I am so well descended!" cried the lady, clasping her hands together in joy.

"Well descended!" cried the stranger, in bitter disdain. "Ah! better were it for you, lady, to be the daughter of the poorest peasant in England, if he were an honest man, than to come of the tainted line that calls your father its head! I am speaking bitter words for a daughter's ears, but you will learn the truth some time, and it is better for you that you should know it now."

The black-faced skipper set his teeth together in rage, but word he dared not speak, for he stood in wholesome awe of the strangely disguised man.

"Go on, go on!" the lady cried; "let me hear the worst that can be said. Perhaps you speak with the voice of a foe, and when I am face to face with my father he can easily disprove the statement."

"The position that you will find him in when you reach the land will be ample proof that I speak nothing but the truth," the stranger replied, significantly.

"Go on, go on! I burn with impatience!" she cried.

Your father, Thomas Craven, Earl of Crofton, was a trusted and an honored friend of the martyred king, Charles the First, and when he perished on the scaffold, none exhibited more grief, or swore more loudly to revenge his death; and revenge, the awful event he did by deserting to the enemy on the first favorable opportunity, carrying with him important papers, the contents of which, disclosed to Cromwell, aided more than anything else to secure the downfall of the royal cause."

A deep sigh came from the lips of the girl, and with her fair hands she covered her glorious eyes, as though by the act she would blur remembrance.

"Oh, no; it cannot be true!" she said at last, quite feebly.

"It is true!" the Lion Captain replied, firmly.

"The annals of England are stained by the crime! Richly was he paid by Cromwell for his traitorous betrayal of the trust confided to his care, but the act gained for him the contempt of every honest man, and at last, unable to endure the public scorn which met him at every turn, he fled from England and in a foreign land sought amid strangers to lead a new life. And to what land did this recreant Englisher come? What country did he honor with his presence? Not a civilized clime in the world but would scorn such a man and such a deed! One country alone offered shelter—Algiers, the home of the pirates!"

CHAPTER IV. THE ALGERINES.

THE dark-faced skipper could restrain himself no longer.

"Oh, lady!" he cried, "let not this stranger's awful story fall heavy on your ears! With his own lips your father shall disprove the tale. It is the base invention of his enemies, who, jealous of your father's noble nature, and unable to use him for their base purposes, first, by secret, underhand means, ruined his fortunes at home, stained his good name, and then, by craft and trickery, drove him from his native land."

"Well, are you through now, good Master Tendrell?" the Lion Captain asked, contemptuously.

"Yes, even though I am helpless in your power, still will I speak the truth, although the penalty be the forfeit of my life!"

"Now, by the red cross of St. George! Master Dick, but you are a faithful and a staunch servant, and pity 'tis that you serve so truly so vile a master; and yet to a man of your broken, desperate fortunes what other road is open?" cried the stranger, in bitter scorn. "Lady, let me introduce this gentleman to you," he continued, "for I perceive that you really know him not, although freely you trust him with the rich treasure of your matchless self. By name, Richard Tendrell; by his companions in crime most aptly termed Black Dick of Crofton, upon whose head a price is set, and who dares not be found within the four seas of Britain for fear of the hangman's rope. I have given you the two names which he has borne in his native land from which the fear of an outraged law has forever banished him, but he has still a third name—a name that he sports when he treads the deck of an Algerine galley, decked out in turban and Moorish garb, as great a Moslem to all outward signs as any tawny pirate of this accursed, sun-bitten land!" and the speaker shook his clenched fist fiercely at the low shore of Africa. "He is a bloody-minded leader of bloody-handed men! Against his own race, his own kin does he war, and in the hour of slaughter he waves aloft in triumph the Moorish cutlass, red with Christian blood!"

"Oh, horrible!" cried the girl in anguish.

"Lady, remember that my tongue is tied!" the skipper exclaimed. "I am in this man's power and he holds my life in the hollow of his hand!" And then he turned in sullen rage to the stranger. "You call me pirate and butcher! what better are you? Are you not an Ishmaelite of the waters, your hand against every man and all against you?"

"I decoy not innocent women to fearful dooms!" the Lion Captain exclaimed, fiercely. "You would save the lady from me to make her your prey!"

"You are a villainous liar!" the other retorted, "and were it not that I scorn to strike you now that you are helpless and at my mercy, your life should pay the forfeit of your words!"

"I will deliver the lady to her father! By all that I hold sacred in this world, I swear it!"

"No doubt, no doubt!" the other cried, "but you, as well as I, know the fate to which she is destined."

"I know nothing!" the skipper replied, sullenly.

"I will inform you then!" the Lion Captain exclaimed, "for it is just possible that the renegade has not trusted you with the secret, though I doubt it. And, lady, you listen, too, for I will unfold to you the fate to which you are most surely doomed unless you accept my proffered aid. Your father is high in the confidence of Aboo Hassan, the Dey of Algiers; he is, to a certain extent, his right-hand man; he also commands one of the Dey's piratical cruisers; but the man who climbs to power in these Eastern domains treads a most perilous and uncertain road, particularly if he happens to be a renegade. Even though one may be securely perched upon the very top of the ladder, there is no telling how soon some bold hand may shake him from his place of pride and power. And

so, in your father's case, he feels that he is treading upon dangerous and uncertain ground; he would render his position with the Dey more secure, and with an almost fiendish craftiness he has inflamed the imagination of the tyrant with rich descriptions of your grace and beauty. The picture of your mother, whom you most strongly resemble, he has shown to Aboo Hassan and pronounced it to be your likeness. Mark, lady, I speak plainly, for in such a matter as this we cannot stop to pick and choose our words. Your father intends you for this bloody-minded, fickle, tawny tyrant! He sells you to him outright merely for the lease of power. It was all carefully arranged, although this base wretch denies it. You were told that you were going to your father at Cartagena, but, instead of so sailing, you were brought near to the Algerine coast; a pirate galley was to meet you, seize you and bring you in triumph to Algiers; there your father was to receive you, tell you a well-concocted story of how he had also fallen into the hands of the Moors but had been kindly treated by them and elevated to a high office, and then, gradually, little by little, the praises of the Dey were to be sung in your ears until at last you consented to the life of shame to which the hand of your sire was to conduct you. You, an honest Christian English girl was to become one of the wives of this brutal monster of Algiers!"

"No, I cannot—I will not believe it!" the lady cried, wringing her hands in anguish.

"It is the truth, before high Heaven. I swear it!" cried the Lion Captain, impressively.

And then, all of a sudden, the booming of a gun came sounding over the waters and startled both the spectators and actors of this strange scene.

The shot had been fired by the vessel of the stranger as a warning of danger, and, as they all looked around them and one and all gazed toward the land, out from the shelter of the headland came a rakish, stately craft, evidently an Algerine war-vessel, and one of considerable tonnage, too.

"There, behold, lady!" cried the Lion Captain; "yonder comes the tawny monster eager for his prey. Against your will I cannot bring myself to tear you from your danger, although I am strongly tempted so to do. For the present I must bid you farewell, for I must go on board my ship and prepare to receive this stranger with all the honors of war, for, big as she is, if I can't blow her out of the water or sink her below the wave inside of an hour then will I never shake my flag again to the breeze; but, lady, forget not my parting words, no matter where you are, no matter what danger threatens you; if you are on the sea—if it is on the land, in the trackless desert, where the wild simoom is king—within the wall of Algiers, yea! even within the palace of the dusky Dey himself: in your last hour—in your direst extremity, call upon the Lion, and he may be near to render aid, when all means save the great hand of Heaven seem powerless. To the boat, men."

Quickly they descended to the launch, and the Lion Captain standing up in the stern waved an adieu.

Impulsively the girl cried out the question which had arisen in her mind:

"Why do you take such an interest in me?"

"Because I love you, Cleora Craven, and fain would win you for my own," was the answer that came peeling back over the surface of the swelling waves.

The Algerine came on apace.

The skipper, whose keen eyes had been attentively fixed upon the Moorish war-vessel, anxiously endeavoring to make her out, suddenly gave vent to a joyous exclamation. He had recognized the craft.

A gleam of fierce joy illuminated his swarthy face, and he darted to the side of the vessel and shook his fist defiantly at the retreating boat, now pulling back to the rakish craft of the stranger as fast as the stout arms of the rowers and the good old ash-blades they wielded could propel her.

"It is the frigate of Ali, Pasha Blue Beard!" he shouted, at the top of his lungs. "Now look well to yourself, Lion-head, or else a slave to the great Ali you may become!"

This renowned Moor, Ali of the blue beard, was reputed to be not only the boldest, but the ablest, of all the wild sea-rovers who swept the Mediterranean, whether of Algiers, Tripoli or Tunis. All three of the Moorish powers, at the time of which we write, claimed a sovereignty over the waters adjacent to their territory.

The ship of Ali was the most powerful of any of the Moorish cruisers, being a brig carrying

twenty-eight guns and fully manned by a crew of desperadoes, not a man of whom but richly deserved the rope.

In grandiloquent style this very king of pirates had named his craft The Sword of Death, and for his banner he floated a blood-red flag, whereon was emblazoned a silver crescent, the Moslem's emblem, crossed by a naked Moorish saber.

Ruthless as a tiger mother bereft of her young, bloody-handed as the flag under which he sailed, no man, the keel of whose ship pressed the blue waters of the Mediterranean, was more to be dreaded as a foe than Ali.

The skipper ordered sail to be made at once, for he saw that a conflict was at hand, and he desired to get out of harm's way; in his mind, though, he had no doubt at all in regard to the issue of the fight.

The craft of the Lion-head was hardly half the size of the Algerine frigate, and then, too, the skipper could hardly bring himself to believe that the stranger was really in earnest when he had declared his purpose of engaging the Algerine war-vessel.

"When he discovers that it is Pasha Blue Beard, he will think twice before he shows his teeth!" the skipper observed, to the red-bearded helmsman.

"He is in a trap, though," the other replied; "he cannot hope to escape by flight and must either fight or yield."

"If he does fight it will be because he cannot help himself!" the skipper exclaimed.

By this time the Lion Captain had reached his vessel, and the first move after he got on board was to put the craft about. She had shown her stern to the Algerine in running down to pick up her captain, but now, as boldly as though the superior force of the Moor had not been noted, she wore around, and with all sail set made straight for the Algerine frigate.

"She goes to destruction!" the skipper exclaimed.

A boom of a gun announced that the fight had commenced.

CHAPTER V. THE SEA-FIGHT.

THE Algerine frigate was a good sailer and tolerably well handled, although not with the precision and skill common to the officers and men of the European navies.

Her decks were crowded with sailors, a motley crew, for, though they wore the Moorish dress, not one tenth part of them were native to the African soil.

However great soldiers the followers of the Prophet may have been on the land, since first the world saw and trembled at the sight of the Crescent banner, yet on the sea they have never distinguished themselves.

Men of all nations were there in that crew, renegades from every country and from every clime; a horde of ruthless, barbarous souls who fought for gold, not for love of country, nor inspired by the noble spirit of daring which gives rise to wondrous deeds.

Even the ship was a renegade: originally a Spanish plate-ship, but captured by the sea-rovers and transformed into an armed vessel.

Upon the quarter-deck of the craft stood the great pasha himself, Ali, of the Blue Beard.

A tall, well-built man was the Moorish commander, with a black, eagle-like eye, a massive face, a nose hooked like the beak of a bird of prey, and a beard fully a foot long, black in hue, but with a slight bluish tinge to it, from which circumstance he derived his name. The beard was all fancifully plaited into little tails, and each and every tail tied with a small blue-black ribbon.

Like a very king the pirate was arrayed; the shops of the rich Orient had been ransacked to provide him with fitting apparel; costly chains of gold, curiously inlaid with precious gems, adorned his person, and the diamond buckle that fastened the short blue plumes in his turban was of the value of a ship of the line, fully equipped.

Great had been the astonishment of the Moor upon discovering the craft of the Lion-head hovering near to the lugger.

"By the beard of the Prophet!" he cried, "I fear this fellow has secured the prize that we are after!"

But the first officer of the frigate, carefully surveying the scene through a powerful marine glass, announced that he could distinguish the figure of a woman upon the deck of the lugger.

"Allah be praised!" exclaimed the sea-roller, in joy; "and double praise be given to the Great Ruler who has placed this dog of a Greek in my power. I am sick of hearing of the deeds of this

Lion of the Sea! No flag must float in triumph in these waters but the banner of the Crescent. What think you, Achmet—can the fellow escape us?"

"I think not, and from the preparations on his deck I think he means to fight us." The officer had been busily engaged surveying the deck of the Lion by the aid of the glass.

Ali laughed loud and long.

"Fight us!" he exclaimed at last; "is the fellow mad? By the Holy Tomb, at a single broadside I'll blow him out of the water!"

"I can distinguish only two guns," the other observed; "yet stay! she has a heavy piece mounted amidships."

"A heavy piece!"

"A very monster of a gun, and they are preparing it for action."

"Are we within range?"

"No, not yet, but I think that that big gun is heavier than any piece of metal we carry. It may be their design to keep off and pound us to pieces at long range."

Ali was silent for five or six minutes, attentively watching with his eagle eyes the strange craft, and also noting the speed of his own vessel.

"It is impossible!" he cried at last; "we have the foot of them; this wind serves us better than it does them. We shall overhaul her within an hour."

The observation of the Moor was perfectly correct. The breeze was from the land and both vessels were running straight before it, but from her superior spread of canvas the frigate had the advantage. Indeed, in such a breeze there were few crafts afloat that could outstrip The Sword of Death.

The Lion Captain was not long in ascertaining this fact, but as from the first he had made up his mind to fight rather than fly, it did not incommode him in the least.

Steadily the frigate gained, until at last the first officer announced to his chief that in ten or fifteen minutes more they would be within range.

The Algerine drum at once beat to "quarters," and hardly had the sound died away, when a flash of flame, a white puff of smoke, spurted out from the deck of the Lion, followed by the boom of a big gun.

The fight had commenced.

It was a well-aimed shot, for it tore a hole through the bulwarks of the frigate, ranged along the deck, dismounting two guns and killing half a dozen men.

A cry of rage came from the lips of Ali as he beheld the destruction.

"Tear me a hole in yonder ship, old Selim!" he exclaimed, addressing the master-gunner. He had sprung from the quarter-deck and rushed to the bow in a frenzy of rage.

Carefully the man adjusted the gun, a bow-chaser, and as heavy a piece of metal as there was on board; then, waiting until the craft of the Greek rose on the surface of the swell, fired.

A well-aimed shot, indeed, but the distance was too great, and the ball sunk beneath the waves twenty feet short of the Lion.

"Give her more elevation; the next will reach!" Ali cried.

But, hardly had the command passed his lips, when the big gun of the stranger belched forth its missile again—the aim of the gunner so good this time that the frigate's main-topmast was shot away and falling down with the main-top-sail yard across the larboard fore and fore-top-sail, rendered her head-yards unmanageable.

A yell of triumph went up from the Lion's crew as they beheld the result of the successful shot, and this cry of delight was answered by a howl of rage from the lips of the Algerines.

The unknown was quick to improve the advantage which he had gained. He fled no longer, but put his helm up hard and brought his craft around.

The frigate, quick to seize upon the chance, let fly her whole broadside, but firing as the vessel rose, the balls harmed only the rigging of the other craft, cutting away only a few unimportant ropes and light spars. Then the Lion, shooting by her now unwieldy and almost unmanageable antagonist, passed under her stern and, for the first time displaying her battery which had been concealed by false ports, raked her so terribly, pouring the fire in at almost point-blank range, that the decks of the Algerine were covered with blood and most of her guns dismounted.

Never since the days when he first commenced to sail the seas, had Ali, of the Blue Beard, been so roughly handled; but, encouraged by his ferocious commands, the men stuck to the guns and fought like tigers.

But, crippled as she was, the frigate could do but little execution, for the Lion Captain handled his craft with the skill of an admiral.

Five minutes more and the gaff and mizzen top-gallant-mast went by the board and some ugly holes just at the water-line threatened the destruction of the Moor.

Half the crew of the pirate had been slain outright, a quarter more, bleeding from wounds, were pretty effectually disabled from active service; the deck was slippery with blood; while, totally unmanageable, the vessel rose and fell on the swell of the waves, a helpless hulk, entirely at the mercy of her antagonist, who had suffered no material damage in the fight.

Still the blood-red flag of Ali floated, for, although it had been shot away during the action, yet the ruthless pasha had climbed into the rigging and nailed it to the mast, despite the hot fire of the enemy.

Again and again the Lion had "raked" the frigate, and now coming down upon her quarter was apparently about to attempt to board.

Ali mustered his men to repel the attack.

The Lion came up, threw her grappling-irons aboard and fastened to the Algerine, despite the strenuous attempts of the pirates to prevent it; and then, up over the side swarmed the boarders, led by the Lion Captain in person.

Brief was the struggle, for the Algerines, dispirited by the slaughter of their comrades, made but a feeble resistance; Ali's threats and curses could not inspirit the despairing crew.

The Algerines were driven to the quarter-deck after a brief and bloody struggle; then they threw down their arms and cried for quarter, their chief alone excepted.

For when he saw that the fate of the day was decided—that further resistance was hopeless, and death or captivity alone remained for him, he chose to trust himself to the mercies of the sea, rather than submit.

With a terrible curse he hurled his blood-red saber at the victorious foe and then leaped into the sea.

The Lion Captain had pressed the pasha hard; to capture the ruthless Ali had been his wish, and great was his disappointment when he saw the Algerine betake himself to the water.

"A boat—a boat!" he cried. "A cap full of gold to the man who takes the pasha!"

But fortune at last was resolved to befriend the Barbary sea-rover, for the cry suddenly went up that the vessel was sinking, and so, in truth, it was; the guns of the Lion had been served only too well.

In hot haste then the victors retreated to their own ship, cut away the grappling-irons and had hardly got good and clear, when, with a sudden lurch, the frigate filled and went down.

The Lion-head had kept his word—he had sunk the Algerine.

During the fight the lugger had made sail southerly; the crew had attempted to rebel, but the skipper and the red-bearded helmsman, well-armed, had quelled the mutiny.

The Lion would have pursued, but out from the shelter of the harbor of Algiers, attracted by the sound of the guns, came a whole fleet of Moorish vessels.

"We must stand out to sea!" the Lion Captain cried. "The lady is doomed to go to Algiers, but what I could not accomplish on the sea, I may succeed in achieving on the land!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE TYRANT OF ALGIERS.

THE city of Algiers, the capital of the territory ruled over by the piratical Dey, Abou Hassan, derives its name from the Arabic, Al Jezireh, the island. It is built on the slope of a mountain which rises from the coast and commands the harbor at its base; and the houses of resplendent whiteness, appearing one above the other, seem as if rising in successive layers of snow, and present a most dazzling picture from the sea.

The houses are all flat-roofed, and the inhabitants in the evening walk or sit upon them to take the air and enjoy the cool sea breeze which, in the afternoon, always springs up; the land wind, which generally prevails during the day, comes scorching hot from the great sandy deserts of the interior and in summer-time almost renders life unbearable.

The tops of the houses are generally covered with earth and serve as small gardens. The streets are narrow and the houses are for the most part very badly built.

Looking at the city from the sea one building towers well above the rest; this is the palace of the Dey, the Kasbah, or citadel, for so uncertain, at times, has been the hold that the Deys had over their turbulent and unruly subjects

that it was necessary to ensconce their precious persons behind strong walls, and each and every Dey had surrounded himself with a well-paid force of mercenary soldiers, by means of which the turbulent spirit of the mob was in a measure kept in check.

The harbor of the city was far from being good, as it was small, with very little depth of water, and the entrance to it was rendered dangerous by numerous rocks. The mole of the harbor, some five hundred feet long, extended from the main land to a small island where there was a castle, well provided with heavy guns and a strong water battery. The position naturally was a very strong one, and all its advantages had been skillfully improved by the cunning engineers who had planned the defensive works.

On the land side the city was by no means as strongly defended, for the wall that encircled the town was old, badly planned and built and not calculated to resist a well-directed attack. The only strong position on the land side was a castle placed on an eminence just outside the walls, known as the Emperor's Fort, and which completely commanded the city.

We will introduce the reader at once to the palace of the Dey, to the grand hall of the Kasbah, where Abou Hassan sat in council.

The Moorish ruler was seated on a raised throne, his legs crossed after the fashion of the Orientals, smoking a chibouque, as the Turkish pipes are termed, which rejoices in a flexible stem half a dozen feet long.

Abou Hassan was not over thirty-five, with rather a handsome face, although deeply marked by the dark lines which plainly told of evil passions, not restrained, and hours of wild debauch.

On the Dey's right hand stood his minister of war, a tall, stately man with iron-gray hair and a saturnine face, smoothly shaven. This was El Boro, pasha, and he was also commander-in-chief of the army—almost a sinecure this office, for Algiers was strong only on the sea.

On the left hand of the Algerine ruler was the minister of finance and of the navy; the first position was almost as much a sinecure as El Boro's second, but as the head of the navy, the very back-bone of the Dey's kingdom, and from whence the funds to carry on the government were mainly derived, the portfolio was one of the most important in the Dey's gift. El Tokar this officer was named, a withered, dried-up little man, quite old and with a ferocious shock of gray hair and a tangled beard of the same hue. The most popular officer in the kingdom was this El Tokar, and by the populace he was generally termed the Holy Man, because he made great professions of his religious faith, and he had made a couple of pilgrimages to the tomb of the Prophet at Mecca.

A more unscrupulous, wily, shrewd, and yet ignorant old rascal it would have been difficult to find in all Africa than this same Holy Man, for religion was with him but a cloak to mask the most designing knavery.

Before the throne of the Moor stood the English ambassador, Sir Edmund Boleingham, a thick-set, stoutly-built gentleman of medium height, middle-aged, of courtly bearing, and yet with that air of resolution apparent in his face, so common to the natives of the tight little island.

Sir Edmund held in his hand a number of official-looking papers, to which he referred every now and then.

The Englishman looked firm, the Dey appeared angry, El Boro's face was as impassive as the face of a marble statue, while the minister of finance had his thick nose elevated in the air in supreme contempt.

A delicate and dangerous mission Sir Edmund had come upon—no less than to remonstrate with the tyrant in regard to the seizure of certain English ships and to demand not only the release of the prisoners, who had been taken, but a money payment for damages.

Few men would have dared to visit Algiers upon such a mission. Courteously, but with great firmness, the Englishman had made known his errand.

The Dey, amazed that any mortal should presume to speak so plainly and so bluntly, burst into an explosion of rage.

"By the beard of the Prophet!" he cried, "do you Englishers take me to be a dog that I shall yield up my prisoners and my spoils at your demand?"

"Let me point out to your highness that no war exists between England and Algiers, but that your subjects, in a time of peace, and in defiance of the law of nations, have seized upon our trading ships, peaceable merchantmen, stolen

the goods contained in those ships and made slaves of the passengers and crews."

"Algiers is the mistress of the sea," replied the Dey, proudly. "No flag has a right to float on the Mediterranean without our permission. If your traders desire to sail in my sea they must pay for the privilege!"

"You refuse the just demand I make?"

"By the green turban of great Mahomet!" cried the tyrant, rising in a rage, "who gave you the right to question me? Insolent Frank! you are not wise to bandy words with me in mine own palace! Are you eager to rush to death that you dare to brave me?"

The Englishman was not at all appalled at this outburst of passion, and, although there was a fierce light visible in his keen gray eyes, yet he restrained his temper and answered calmly as the envoy of so great a power as Britain should answer.

"I stand here as the representative of my sovereign, Charles the Second, by the Grace of God, King of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and I demand justice for the subjects of my king!"

"And if I refuse, Sir Ambassador—if I laugh at your demand, what then?"

"Then, as the herald of England, I declare war!"

The Dey burst out into a hearty fit of laughter, in which the minister of finance sycophantically joined, but El Boro smiled not.

"England declares war!" the Moor exclaimed. "Bah! what care I for England? Are her arms long enough to reach across the seas to Algiers?"

"You may find them so!" Sir Edmund retorted, quickly.

"Not all the nations of the earth combined can conquer Algiers!" the Holy Man declared, grandiloquently.

The minister of war seized upon the chance to speak.

"If your most magnificent highness will listen to my poor counsel," he said, "you will take time to think this matter over, and not reply in haste. This gentleman, I am certain, will give us time to debate the subject and not force us to an immediate answer," and he bowed courteously to Sir Edmund as he spoke.

"Certainly; any reasonable time."

The Holy Man pursed his lips in contempt; it was plain that his voice was all for war, but Abou Hassan, weak and irresolute as he was cruel and tyrannical, after glancing from one minister to the other for a moment, yielded to the influence of El Boro.

"Be it so," he said, at last; "we will deliberate upon the matter. When we arrive at a decision we will send for you."

The ambassador understood that he was dismissed, and so retired with his train.

At the Dey's command the council-hall was cleared and the Moorish ruler left alone with his two counselors.

"In Allah's name! El Boro, why did you wish me to think over the matter?" the Dey cried. "I will not yield a single prisoner without ransom, no—nor a pound's weight of their goods! What are these English dogs that I should crouch and whine at their command?"

"Your highness, I have advised you only for the best!" the minister of war declared. "I have secret information that an English fleet of over thirty sail are gathering at Gibraltar under the command of Robert Blake, Lord High Admiral of England, the best sea captain that the world has ever known, and that it is his intention, if you refuse to arrange this matter, to storm Algiers."

The Algerine turned fairly black in the face with rage.

"Storm Algiers!" he cried. "Are we then children to tremble at this threat? Are our forts of paper, our men straw, our guns useless? Bah! Ali, Pasha Blue Beard, with his single frigate would rout a whole fleet of these Englishmen!"

Hardly had the boast left the lips of the Dey when the door opened and gave entrance to the sea-rover himself, who was a privileged character at court.

Ali, with his garments in disorder, just as he had been plucked from the sea, horrified the Dey when he told the story of the sea-fight and the loss of his ship.

The Dey, with many a bitter oath, swore that he would be fearfully avenged upon the daring Lion Captain, who had put to sea and succeeded in escaping from the Algerine fleet.

Little fitted was the Dey now to take part in any council, for he could only rave of vengeance and curse the Greek rover, and so the meeting was dissolved. It was plain, though,

from the temper that the Dey was in that he would not yield to the demands of the English ambassador.

CHAPTER VII.

THE STORY OF HAMET.

WHEN the Algerine fleet sailed out and the unknown was forced to fly from the overpowering force, after having so bravely beaten the ferocious Ali, the lugger at once made sail straight for the Moorish ships.

The sailors tore their hair, rended their garments and swore in a dozen different tongues, but the skipper and the helmsman, drawn pistols in their hands, overawed the rest.

As for the lady she paid no heed to the lugger's course or to the turmoil around her, but kept her gaze intently fixed upon the fast retreating ship of the unknown.

"He loves me—he loves me!" she murmured a hundred times, in dire perplexity; "why should he love me, a stranger; and who and what is he?"

One of the Algerine vessels overhauled the lugger, a boat boarded her, and the crew were at once taken off and pressed into the service, despite their expostulations; then four Algerine sailors replaced the crew and the lugger continued on her way toward the harbor.

It was plain that the skipper and the helmsman were no strangers to the Moors and that the lugger's arrival had been expected.

The lady had resumed her veil, and, after the lugger again got under way, the two Englishmen proceeded to the little cabin and in a short time emerged from it completely disguised in Moorish garbs, and from the ease with which they wore them it was plain that the dress was not an unaccustomed one.

The lady never noticed the transformation, or if she did, heeded it not; in fact, she acted like one in a trance, perfectly passive.

The lugger made the harbor and came to anchor off the mole.

The lady was at once conveyed to the Kasbah and placed in a sumptuously-furnished apartment in the right wing of the citadel; the Kasbah was built in the form of a hollow square with narrow wings stretching out to the north and south.

Some slave women were in attendance to receive the lady, and a plentiful repast, served in the peculiar style of the East, was in readiness.

But the girl had no appetite; she only hungered to come face to face with her father.

At last a bell tinkled, and the slave women, understanding the signal, withdrew; the curtains, which concealed the entrance at the further end of the room, were drawn aside and a tall figure clad like an Englishman in sober gray entered the room.

The lady rose and extended her hands; the man advanced and pressed her warmly to his breast. It was her father.

The greeting over he seated himself on the low couch by the window that looked out upon the fortifications that guarded the Kasbah, and the lady knelt by his side.

Carefully she surveyed the costume that he wore, then raised her eyes to his face.

"You are dressed like an Englishman, father," she observed.

"I know what you mean," he replied, quickly. "My faithful Tendrell has related to me all that occurred on board of the lugger. I do not blame you, child, that you look with apprehension upon my face, but I trust that, with a few words, I can remove all your doubts and fears. The action of this unknown captain, who disguises himself so strangely, puzzles me; his knowledge, too, is wonderful, although I can in part account for that. He takes great care to conceal his features from the world and yet I know as well who he is as he does himself. He thinks that he is my foe and that I am his, but never did a man in this life labor under a greater mistake, for I am the best friend he has in all this wide world, and in the time to come none will do more to aid him."

The girl listened in astonishment to this disclosure.

"And now to clear myself," he continued. "Part of the story that this Lion-head told you about myself and fortunes was true and part false, and the false part made black all the rest. I am your father, Thomas Craven, once Earl of Crofton and Knight of Engleboro; I did hold an important commission in the royal army; I did desert that banner and join with Cromwell, but I carried no papers, received no bribe. All that I gave was my own right arm and the poor influence of my name. I joined with Cromwell because I became satisfied that the royal cause

was hopeless and that to longer continue the struggle would be only to bring fresh misery upon a suffering country, already bleeding at every pore. I left England and came abroad because I had lost all in the royal service; money, lands, all were gone; I had naught but my sword, and when the war ended in England my occupation was ended. I will not weary you with the details of the life of adventure that I led in my search after fortune, but at last fate turned my steps to this country. The Dey wanted Europeans to teach his subjects the art of war; I entered his service, and have risen high in his favor. I wear the Algerine garb to please the prejudices of the people, but am at heart as good a Christian as when I led a squadron of horse in the royal service. Am I doing wrong to earn my bread by honestly serving this Algerine prince, Moor though he be?"

"Oh, father, it is not for me to sit in judgment upon your acts!" she exclaimed. "Whatever you say, I must believe."

"And now for the last accusation; this unknown declares that I have brought you here to sell you to the Algerine tyrant in order to strengthen my own hold upon him. Now, listen attentively while I unfold secrets of state to you and show you really what my purpose is and what I design to do. Ever since I entered the Dey's service I have had great influence over him until lately, and my influence, I declare before Heaven, has not only been exerted for the good of Algiers, but for the good of the world at large with whom these Algerines are perpetually at war! But, within the last two months a new man has arisen—a fanatical knave, who trades upon his religion—a shrewd rogue enough, but utterly ignorant of the outer world. He foolishly believes that these little petty Moorish powers are strong enough to cope with the kingdoms of Europe, and he is urging the Dey on to steps that must not only lead him to utter ruin, but will be almost certain to bring the whole country to the very brink of destruction. The Dey is urged to bid defiance to England, although the great admiral, Blake, with a powerful fleet is not three days' sail away. Now then, supposing that this story is true, what an utter idiot am I to give you to a man who is blindly bent upon rushing headlong to ruin! Now listen to what my plans really are, and keep the secret locked securely within your own breast; breathe it not even in the solitude of your chamber, for in this land the very walls have ears," and the speaker lowered his voice almost to a whisper as he spoke.

"Some years ago there were two brothers, both claimants to the throne of Algiers; the younger murdered the elder and seized the scepter of state. He was the father of the present ruler, Abou Hassan. It was believed that that elder brother left no issue, but he did; he had a son by a Greek woman, one of his wives. When he was murdered that Greek woman fled with her child, aided by friends, and took refuge in Tunis, and from there passed to the Greek islands, her home."

"The child whom she bore so carefully away is now a man; his name is Hamet, and he is the rightful lord of Algiers, for this Abou Hassan sits in his father's place, and that father had no just claim to the throne. Abou Hassan is a usurper; already he is unpopular with the mass of the people, for he has played the tyrant most thoroughly, and now, if he keeps on in his mad career, there is nothing on earth that can save Algiers from ruin. The break between myself and the Dey must soon come, for I will not be a party to this mad war with England. I shall leave his service—leave it as I entered it, openly and with honor; but when I am free, then if I join Hamet in his attempt upon the throne of Algiers, can any one accuse me of a dishonest action?"

"It would not be just!"

"Hamet has the best right to the throne; in every way he is the superior of the tyrant," the earl continued. "As a naval commander his equal sails not upon the Mediterranean; he is a free, bold fellow with a soul as noble as the name he bears. Already the four winds have spread his fame, and the world that knows him have learned to look upon him with respect. He will make a ruler such as Algiers never has had since the time of the brothers, Barbarossa. And, mark ye, as yet he dreams not that any such high fortune is within his reach; in his wildest hour of triumph the bright thought that some day he might sit upon the throne of Algiers and wield the scepter of the Dey, has never occurred to him. When I leave the service of this tyrant I will seek him; I will unfold to him my plan; I will tell him how ripe the city is for revolt—how gladly the Moors will

throw off the yoke of the tyrant, Aboo Hassan, and how gladly yield to a milder ruler. In himself Aboo Hassan is nothing! He is a man utterly without ability. He cannot lead a squadron in the field, command a ship upon the ocean, nor plan with wisdom in the council-chamber. Hamet can do all three. And now, daughter, for the part which you are to play. You are now of age, and it is time that you were wedded; you are heart-free, are you not?"

"Where have I seen any man to win my love?"

"True, and it was to keep your wondrous beauty from the rude gaze of the world that I decreed that in public you should always wear a veil. Well, I have a husband for you—no turbaned Moor—no follower of the Prophet—no Algerine with half a hundred wives, but a Christian like yourself, although in the future, for certain reasons, he may be forced to keep that fact concealed. What think you of this Hamet? He is a good Christian—was so reared by his mother, and although his life has been one of wild adventure yet still he has stuck to his creed. What say you, girl, will you wed with him and queen it over Algiers after his strong arm, aided by my wits, has wrested the scepter from the tyrant?"

"One question, father!" cried the lady, tremulously, "this man—I have met him, have I not?"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RENEGADE'S QUEST.

"COULD you name him?" the renegade Englishman observed, with a peculiar look from under his heavy, overhanging brows, at the face of his child.

"Yes, from your description I feel sure that I could!" and the girl spoke with the impulsiveness common to youth.

"Perhaps you could; but of that no more at present. Now that I have fully and freely explained my position and my aims, will you give me the trust and faith that a daughter should give unto a father?"

"Oh, gladly, sir!" she cried, longing to cast herself into his arms, yet restrained by some influence, but what it was she knew not.

"My child, confide in me, trust wholly to my guidance and I will place you in a position from which you can look down upon a kneeling world!" Then he folded her to his broad breast, imprinted a kiss upon a white forehead, bade her be of good cheer, assured her that her every want should be attended to, and withdrew, promising soon to return.

In the outer apartment the skipper of the lugger waited. Not now, though, was he attired in the rude garb natural to the sons of the sea; on the contrary, he was arrayed like an Algerine and a Moor of quality, too, for his garments were of the richest description, and the hilt of the Turkish saber he wore sparkled with costly gems.

A man of rank in Algiers was this renegade son of the British isle. Muley Mahomet he was called, and he was chief of the mercenaries who formed the body-guard of the Dey. So uncertain was the grip that Aboo Hassan had of the Algerine scepter, that he dared not trust to his subjects, but surrounded himself with soldiers of fortune whose fidelity he believed he could rely upon, because he paid them well.

The tyrant was not a shrewd calculator, and did not take into account the well-known fact that these desperate blades who sell their services for gold, always go to the highest bidder, and that in time of trouble his mercenaries could hardly be depended upon to back his quarrel to the death.

"Well, is she reasonable?" Tendrell asked. A most faithful follower of Thomas Craven's fortunes was he, not for gold or worldly advantage, but because he was a foster-brother to the once proud earl of Crofton, and had grown up from babyhood with him.

"Oh, yes; she has perfect faith in me, and will follow my bidding to the very letter."

"By Satan and all his imps!" cried Tendrell, suddenly, "I can't get over the meeting with that fellow with the lion's head! It is the strangest and most mysterious affair that I ever saw or heard of! The knowledge that he possessed was wonderful, and the way he handled his ship was most marvelous. Never in all my life did I witness such a complete and overwhelming victory. Why, Ali Blue Beard stood no more chance with him than if he had been a country lad who had never smelt blue water. He pounded his frigate to pieces, in no time."

Craven came up close to Tendrell, laid his

hand upon his arm, and then, in a cautious tone, as if afraid the very walls had ears, said:

"Dick, I am not sorry for it. Ali was no friend of either yours or mine. I believe him to be secretly in league with El Tokar to overthrow us, and behind both of them stands a woman."

"You mean Gulnare, the Dey's favorite, the queen of his harem?"

"Yes; she hates us both."

"But why?"

"Because she cannot rule us. She is a fool and dreams that the time will come when her will shall be as law to the Dey. Through him she would queen it over Algiers. From the confident manner of El Tokar I have suspected for some time that he felt certain of some powerful backing. I knew that the scum—the dregs of the city, were at his beck-and-call because he is a 'Holy Man,' and these ignorant wretches, bigoted and fanatical, think that they serve heaven in serving him. The Dey, thanks to her counsel and the advice of El Tokar, is mad to bring on a war with England. Admiral Blake even now with a powerful fleet is at Gibraltar. Aboo Hassan this very day has openly defied the English ambassador, and but for my interference would have at once declared war."

"Algiers is strongly fortified," Tendrell suggested.

"Yes, and it has stood many a siege in the last two hundred years. Charles the Fifth was woefully defeated when he essayed to storm the city, but that was over a hundred years ago, and while the defenses of the city are no stronger now than then, the art of war has greatly improved. Algiers might succeed in repulsing Blake, but it is doubtful, for a better commander than he does not now exist in the world, either on sea or land."

"Gulnare has great influence over the Dey."

"Yes, greater influence than any woman that has ever stepped foot within the walls of Algiers; and she is crafty, too, and knows how to use her power."

"But when the star of the new beauty arises, Gulnare's power will speedily vanish."

"I trust so," the other replied, and then changing the subject of the conversation abruptly, he said:

"But in regard to this Greek rover—my curiosity has been strangely excited. I would give much to come face to face with him. Do you think that the matter could be arranged?"

Tendrell looked at his chief in amazement, but the calm, grave face of the renegade was like a mask, and fully concealed his thoughts.

"You would like to see the Lion-head?" he demanded, in astonishment.

"Yes; can you arrange the matter?"

"Oh, I presume so, although when I last saw him his ship was flying before the wind with a dozen Algerine cruisers sharp at his heels."

"If report speaks true, there is no craft in these waters that has the heels of him."

"So I have heard."

"I must see the fellow!" Craven persisted. "It is important to my plans that he and I should have a conference."

Again Tendrell stared; this disclosure was altogether unexpected.

"Faith, my lord, the fellow is no friend to you, but rather a bitter enemy."

"If he is an enemy then the quicker I discover how powerful he is and how much mischief he may be likely to do me, the better. In this life the prudent man is wary how he defies the malice of an unknown foe."

"That's true enough."

"And, therefore, good Tendrell, you must search this Lion of the Seas out; bear him a message from me; say that I have heard of him; that his daring deeds have excited both my admiration and my curiosity, and that I most ardently desire an interview with him. You can find him?"

"Oh, yes; there is little doubt about that. If I take the lugger and put to sea the chances are that I shall not have to go far to find him, for I feel sure that he is hovering near the coast somewhere. The fellow's knowledge puzzles me though. Why, my lord, he knows all about you—all about your daughter and the purpose for which you bring her here, as I related to you when I first got in; and it was plainly apparent to me that he had been on the watch for us; it was his intent to reveal your plans to the girl, and so induce her to accept his protection."

A quiet smile came over the face of the outcast lord, and he nodded his head carelessly.

"He is well served, that is all; his spies have earned their pay as my men earn theirs; but, one thing, Tendrell, you may rely upon, and that is, that his knowledge of me and of my

plans are not half as good as my knowledge of him and his schemes. But, enough of this; you must set out at once and return not to Algiers until you have held speech with this so-called Greek, no matter how great the time that elapses. Tell him from me that I desire an interview with him, and as soon as possible, as I have some weighty matters to communicate."

"Will he not suspect that it is a trap?" the other questioned.

"Undoubtedly; and so, to remove his suspicions, inform him that he can arrange all the details of the interview; let him take all the precautions that his active mind may suggest—throw around the meeting such safeguards that treachery on my part will be impossible. Impress upon his mind that vital consequences may be the result of our conference—the fate of Algiers even may depend upon it."

Tendrell listened in amazement. Used as he was to the schemes of the benighted earl he fully realized that some momentous and gigantic plan occupied his mind, but he was too well acquainted with his chief to press him to a disclosure until the time was ripe for it.

"I'll be on the sea and free of the harbor within the space of an hour!" he cried, preparing to withdraw.

"And, hark ye, Tendrell, take men with you whom you can trust; but even to them breathe not a word that you seek the Greek pirate at my bidding!" the renegade cautioned.

"Oh, have no fear of that, my lord!" the other replied; "I've lived long enough in the world to know the value of a still tongue. The man who keeps his own counsel is always the wisest, and if his plans are betrayed he will have no one to blame but himself," and then Tendrell departed to prepare for his quest.

"Right, my bold Dick!" the renegade muttered, after his follower had departed. "A man should keep his plans to himself, and so I will, in this matter, until the moment of execution arrives. Cleora is the only soul in this world who has the slightest suspicion of the vast enterprise in which I am about to risk not only fortune but life itself, but if I am successful, then secure for life I will be. But I must avoid this war with England; the Dey must not dare the wrath of Britain; at any price the English ambassador must be satisfied, but, if Aboo Hassan is madly bent on war, might not the English attack be turned to my advantage, particularly if it should be a successful one?"

And musing intently upon this difficult problem, the renegade returned to the grand hall where the Dey of Algiers was busily planning how he might capture the bold Lion-head.

CHAPTER IX.

THE QUEEN OF THE HAREM.

WITHOUT the walls of Algiers, nestled under the shadows of the grim towers of the strong defensive work known as the Emperor's Fort, was an elaborately-built country house—a mansion of the most sumptuous description, surrounded by a magnificent garden, that in turn being encompassed by a high and strong wall, almost stout enough to resist cannon-shot.

Carefully guarded was the portal, and entrance could only be gained after cautious scrutiny on the part of the sentinels who, both day and night, kept watch and ward at the gate.

This palace-like mansion was the abode of the reigning favorite of the Dey's harem, Gulnare, and the retreat of Aboo Hassan when he threw aside the cares of government and sought forgetfulness and rest.

The night of the day which had witnessed the stirring scenes on the sea, as we have described, had arrived, and the ebon shades of eventide, falling alike on both land and sea, had wrapped the rural palace of the Dey in a mantle of gloom.

Gulnare, the Queen of the Harem, as she was commonly termed, sat, or rather reclined, in her apartment upon a luxuriant couch, clad like an empress—no Turkish girl, no fair slave from the Georgian land, but a veritable "Frankish" woman, and not over young.

A history, indeed, she had.

She was French, captured by one of the Dey's piratical cruisers on board of a small craft bound from Spain to Italy; by name, Marie de Rohan, or, at least, that was what she called herself, although it is extremely doubtful if she had any right to that most notable appellation. By occupation she was a singer and dancer, and in pursuit of her calling was making a professional tour when captured by the Algerines.

The master of the Algerine galley was a renegade Frenchman, who instantly perceived what a prize he had secured. The Dey had had all sorts of wives, but a French dancer, a lithe,

bounding gazelle of a woman, one to whom the arts of fascination were as familiar as the rings upon her fingers—why, she could not fail to inspire the indolent and somewhat satiated ruler of Algiers.

He reckoned shrewdly, for the Frenchwoman made an almost immediate conquest. She fairly danced herself into the affections of the Dey, and the barbarous master of Algiers fell completely into the power of the wily and unscrupulous Frenchwoman, who in her nature strongly resembled a tiger-cat, being as graceful and as fascinating in her wild beauty as the pride of the jungle, and fully as artful and dangerous.

During her life of adventure—for the French girl had been fairly born in the gutter and reared in the streets—Marie had acquired some few habits which she found it difficult to shake off, even though now she wore the queenly purple.

She was of a passionate nature, and when excited generally "swore like a trooper."

Abboo Hassan was noted for his fickleness in regard to his wives; the favorite of this year was very seldom the woman who had occupied that place the previous one. With nearly every new moon the Dey had had a new wife, until the advent of the Frenchwoman—a new wife, who, for a time, completely outshone the rest; but Marie, with her wonderful art, changed all this. New wives the Dey had as usual, after her arrival, but he very soon tired of them and returned again to Gulnare. No matter how many new beauties entered the harem, its queen, the Frenchwoman, always remained.

And why?

Because she was a "Frank" and not a Turk; because she used her wits, had her spies and her allies; intrigued and fought with terrible earnestness to keep the proud position which she had won.

No friend was she to the English renegade—the dark, stern minister of war. In the first place, she hated him because he was an Englishman, and, like a true Gaul, she believed that every native of foggy Britain was a natural foe, from birth, to sunny France. In the second place, she knew that she could not use him to serve her purpose; he had his own views—his own ends to attain, and he was not the kind of man who would be content to be subordinate to a woman.

But with El Tokar, the Holy Man—a cunning, greasy rascal, who cared not by whose aid he climbed, so long as he still kept going upward—her relations were more than friendly; they were confidential. El Tokar was her creature, spoke with her voice, carried out her will and served her to the utmost extent of his power, for he had faith that in the end her influence would prove superior to any that could be brought to bear upon the Dey.

And so, having explained the intimate relationship which existed between the two, it is no matter for wonder that, on the night of which we write, El Tokar was seated by the side of the Frenchwoman, engaged in busy conference with her.

"She has come, you say?" Marie demanded, a very unladylike scowl upon her mobile features.

"Yes."

"And is she beautiful?"

"As one of Mahomet's angels, they say."

"They say!" cried the Frenchwoman in contemptuous anger. "And is not that what they say of every new face that is brought to tempt the Dey?"

"Ah, but I have this from one of the crew of the vessel, a knave of a Frank whom my spies brought because they thought that he would be able to give me some information."

"El Boro feels that his power is on the wane, and so he brings this girl to make his hold over the Dey more secure; but, it will be for a little while only. The Dey will soon tire of her, and then he will come back to me, as he has done twenty times before."

"Do not be too sure of that, this time, my princess!" El Tokar warned. "This girl is no common beauty, glad to bask for awhile in the favor of our lord and master. She is English, and if she consents to reign she will reign supreme, and that will settle you."

"*Mon Dieu!* I will drive a knife to her heart!" exclaimed the Frenchwoman, leaping to her feet, her face black with passion.

"Would you do that, my princess?" the Holy Man asked, speaking very cautiously and casting a careful glance around him ere he spoke.

"Indeed I would! Do you think that I am a child to let this stranger usurp my place?"

"Pay heed to what I say," the old rascal continued, coming quite near to the angry beauty.

"This girl's success means ruin not only to you but to me. El Boro bears me no good will. If through the aid of this girl he secures the ear of the Dey, my power is gone forever. Am I a dog, then, that this hound of a Frank, who has forsaken both his country and his God, shall kick me from the palace? Oh, no! I am the Holy Man; the people at large believe in me; I carry the odor of sanctity about my person; I have climbed high, and no man shall shake the ladder upon which I stand without danger of feeling the weight of my fist. It was just by accident that I learned of this girl. One of my spies was on board of Ali's vessel, escaped the wreck and came in contact with one of the Frankish dogs who came in the lugger with the girl. When my man heard the fellow's story of the veiled lady and in the captain of the craft recognized El Boro's right-hand man, then to his acute mind the plan of the minister-of-war was at once apparent. He had sent for the girl on purpose to fascinate the Dey and so secure a new hold upon him."

"No doubt—no doubt!" the Frenchwoman murmured, her dainty hands clenched tightly together and the fire of rage flaming in her cheeks.

"What would you do to prevent this English girl from taking your place?" the Holy Man asked, craftily.

"Do? Anything?"

"The Dey has not seen her yet; he does not know that she exists."

Few and simple words, and yet there was a fearful meaning back of the speech.

Marie was quick to catch the idea.

"Can we not arrange it so that Abboo Hassan shall never see her?" she asked, sinking her voice to a whisper and looking fearfully around her as though she was afraid that the very walls might listen and reveal the horrid suggestion.

El Tokar gave a low chuckle. It pleased him to have the Frenchwoman enter so readily into his plan.

"Oh, yes; it might be arranged."

"It must be!" she cried, decisively.

"I know a secret stairway built within the solid wall which leads directly to the room where El Boro has placed the girl."

"A secret stairway!" cried the woman, in pleased surprise.

"Yes, the secret of the stairway is a sacred one known only to Holy Men like myself. Without the apartment the followers of El Boro keep vigilant watch."

"But by means of the stairway a small force of well-armed, resolute, discreet men would gain access to the girl!" Marie cried, her active mind quick to devise a plan.

"Yes, yes, it could be done!" the Holy Man exclaimed, rubbing his hands and chuckling gleefully.

"It must be done!"

"When?"

"To-night! If the blow is to fall the quicker the better."

"But, where is she to be carried?"

"Here!" and the Frenchwoman drew herself up, her eyes darting angry fires. "I must look upon her face—I must see how beautiful this charmer really is, and then—"

"What then?" El Tokar asked, in a whisper.

"*Death!*" Marie responded.

CHAPTER X.

THE BLOW IS STRUCK.

AT twelve that night, when the clouds of heaven hung darkest over the earth, for there was no moon, forth from the gate of the Frenchwoman's palace rode a small troop of horsemen, five men all told. Well mounted, well armed, and the Greek renegade, Selim, the most trusted servitor of the Frenchwoman was at the head of the band.

Straight for the walls of Algiers the party rode. It was but a short fifteen minutes' gallop and soon they drew rein at the western gate of the city.

The warder peered forth from his grated window as the renegade Greek knocked loudly with the butt of one of his pistols on the gate.

"Who is there?" the warder called aloud.

"Friends to Algiers!" Selim responded. "Show a light, and behold the signet-ring of our great Dey."

The warder brought a light to the window and Selim flashed the huge carbuncle stone surrounded by diamonds, the signet-ring of Abboo Hassan, in the eyes of the guardian of the gate.

"Oho! is it thee, Selim?" the warder cried, recognizing the features of the renegade by the light of the lamp.

"Yes; hurry and open the gate, and look

that you keep awake for we shall want to pass out in a couple of hours," the Greek replied.

"You are late to-night," the Algerine remarked, as he removed the fastenings of the gate and admitted the horsemen.

"Yes; our great mistress has had a dream to-night and it troubled her so that she could not sleep."

"Indeed!" cried the warder, in wonder.

"She dreamed that the English dogs had made a sudden attack upon the harbor and that our mighty master, in repulsing the attack, had been terribly wounded, and so nothing would content her but my taking to horse, riding to the city and assuring myself with my own eyes that all was well."

"Glory be to Allah!" cried the guardian of the gate, in amazement; "but what imaginations these women have!"

"So keep awake until I return, for not a wink will the peerless Gulnare sleep to-night until she is assured that our great master is well, and that Algiers is safe."

"All right; I will watch for you."

The Greek and his party passed on, going straight to the palace, and on arriving there Selim sought the proper officer and made known to him the dream of the fair Gulnare. Of course assurance was at once given that the dogs of Franks had not essayed the storming of Algiers and that Abboo Hassan, in perfect health, slept the sleep of the just. And then the officers of the palace, not to be wanting in hospitality, took the messengers into a private apartment, and there, under bolt and bar, they entertained their guests with the rare, heady wines of the Franks, a drink denied to the followers of the Prophet, but more or less indulged in by the majority of them in secret.

And while the debauch was at its height Selim and a companion withdrew, promising soon to return.

The Greek and his confederate went at once to the apartments of the minister of finance, where El Tokar was in readiness for them.

The Holy Man had completely disguised himself in coarse clothing, and he also had dark, hooded cloaks in readiness for the renegade and his assistant.

And when they had arrayed themselves El Tokar led the way through a secret door into a narrow, winding way which led down into the very center of the earth apparently.

The Holy Man was no stranger to the underground region and he had provided himself with a wax taper to afford light. After descending as it were into the very bowels of the earth the party commenced to ascend.

Before starting El Tokar had sworn Selim and his companion to secrecy regarding the secret way, but so full of twists and turns was the passage—an alley here and an alley there, that it was extremely doubtful if either the Greek or the other would have been able to find their way out of the passage if they had been left to their own devices.

Again the winding path went up through the solid wall of the castle and at last came to an abrupt end, a heavy mass of solid masonry blocking the way.

But upon El Tokar touching a secret spring in the stone a portion of the wall rolled noiselessly to one side, affording ample space through which to pass.

As the walls of the room into which the passage led were hung with heavy silken hangings of course the door was concealed, even when open, from the view of any one within the apartment.

Motioning to his companions to move with the utmost caution, El Tokar stole forward, passed through the door, and, parting the silken hangings, carefully looked into the room.

A waxen taper, burning on a stand within, afforded light, and there, reclining carelessly upon a low divan whither she had, in dreamy reverie, cast herself, soundly wrapped in slumber's chain, was the beautiful English girl.

A look of triumph appeared on the fat and greasy face of the Holy Man as he gazed with gloating eyes upon the face and figure of the sleeping girl.

"Bismillah!" he ejaculated, "the Frankish girl is indeed beautiful! What a pity that death will so soon claim her! Ah! if I could only contrive to carry her off and keep her for myself"—and the ugly little rascal chuckled at the bare idea. "But, that is impossible," he continued. "Dangerous it would be, too, for some one would be sure to betray me. It is lucky that the Dey has not seen this fair beauty for he would never forgive the hands that tore her from him, if he had ever looked upon her lovely face and perfect form."

"By the beard of the Prophet! she is a splendid creature!" Selim exclaimed in the ears of the Holy Man. He had taken advantage of his superior height to peep over the shoulder of El Tokar.

"Yes, as fair as one of the angels of paradise."

"You know what my mistress desires?" asked the Greek, a difficulty in the way of carrying out the mission upon which he had been sent suddenly occurring to him.

"Oh, yes."

"It is not to kill the girl, but to bring her bodily and unharmed to her."

"I know—I know!" the Holy Man answered, hastily. "Woman-like, Gulnare wishes to gaze upon the beautiful face of her rival. She will look and then kill."

"Ah! but how are we going to carry this girl away? She will most surely wake and give an alarm the instant we lay our hands upon her."

El Tokar chuckled a moment before he spoke: "Selim, thy head will never endanger the peace of Algiers!" then he answered: "Of course if you should attempt to seize her as she is, most certainly she would squall loud enough to wake the dead. But you've come on no fool's errand; all has been provided for; see!"

And then, with a step as noiseless as the panther stealing in upon its prey, El Tokar stole forward until he reached the side of the sleeping girl; he bent over her as if to assure himself that she was sleeping soundly; and so indeed she was, for the sole heiress of the old house of Craven was in vigorous health—in the full blush and bud of glorious womanhood, and she slept as sleeps the young and honest soul, innocent as yet of this world's cankering care.

Then, with a horrid grin upon his gross and ugly face, the Holy Man produced from a secret pocket a small vial and a piece of sponge, about as big as one's fist.

He removed the stopper from the vial and a strange, subtle perfume floated on the air.

Selim and his companion looked on in amazement, slightly tinged with awe.

Holy Man as El Tokar was, and redolent with the odor of sanctity, as naturally should cling to the lucky mortal who had made two pilgrimages to the tomb of the Prophet at far-off Mecca, yet it was commonly believed that he had some knowledge of the black art, and at a pinch could raise a devil or two from the uttermost fires below.

And this action of El Tokar, letting loose the strange perfume, rather impressed the pair with the idea that something unnatural and unholy was about to take place, and so, ready to retreat upon the first signs of danger to their precious persons, Selim and his companion withdrew into the passageway, their heads alone being visible through the parted silken hangings.

El Tokar poured the contents of the vial upon the sponge, and then, with a dextrous hand, applied it to the nostrils of the sleeping girl.

Strong in the full flush of youth, even in her sleep the maiden resisted the strange attack.

But, El Tokar was wonderfully strong; he threw himself upon the girl and held her quiet until her senses yielded to the influence of the powerful narcotic, and then helpless in every limb she lay powerless at the mercy of her foes.

From his shoulders the Holy Man stripped the dark cloak he wore and carefully wrapped it around the maid so as to completely disguise her. This performed, he beckoned for the two to approach.

Being fully convinced now that no fiends from the upper air were to figure in the scene, the two men came forward, readily enough.

They raised the girl in their strong arms, and, guided by El Tokar, proceeded through the underground passage, not returning as they came, but by another winding path which proceeded for at least a mile under ground and finally reached the surface of the earth again in a dense grove, evidently without the walls of Algiers.

A trap-door, cunningly covered with earth, concealed the entrance to the passage.

"Push straight on!" El Tokar commanded; "three or four hundred yards will bring you to the edge of the grove. Wait there and I will send your comrades with the horse to you."

And then the Holy Man disappeared in the underground way, and the astonished messengers with their prize walked forward in the direction indicated.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE BEACH.

As El Tokar had said, a scant four hundred yards brought the party to the edge of the grove, and then Selim at once recognized the spot.

The secret passage had carried them under the

walls of Algiers, and they were a good mile to the east of the city, close to the beach; in fact, just about half-way between the town and the princely palace of the Frenchwoman.

The sea was in plain sight, for the round, full moon rising slowly, cast a dim light over the scene.

On the hill the walls of the Emperor's Fort looked down grimly upon the scene, while behind the grove to the eastward appeared the roof-tops of Algiers.

But not on the grim walls of the strong fortalice on the hill, not on the roof-tops of the city, were the eyes of the trusted renegade of the Frenchwoman fixed.

No! his gaze rested on the sea—on a strange craft which, with all sails set, was gliding over the glassy, shimmering waters.

The vessel was standing in to the land, and both the renegade and his companion gazed with astonishment upon her.

Well known to them was every Algerine vessel, and at the first glance they saw that this craft was a stranger.

No peaceful merchantman, judging from the outward signs, and, indeed, what trader would dare, even in the "dead waste and middle of the night," to venture so near to the nest of the pirates.

Halting just at the edge of the grove they placed the girl carefully on a grass hillock, behind a thick clump of bushes, and then, peering through the foliage of the grove, earnestly they watched the movements of the strange craft.

A presentiment of danger had fallen upon them; what harm the single vessel could do they knew not, nor could they imagine; still they apprehended mischief.

And then, as they watched, graceful as the sweep of a sea-bird on the wing, the vessel rounded in its course, showing its broadside to the beach, and at the same moment a boat was dextrously lowered, the ship never losing its headway, and commenced to pull stoutly for the shore.

Straight for the lurking-place of the abductors the boat headed, and by the aid of the dim light afforded by the moon, the two watchers were enabled to discover that the boat contained, besides the six oarsmen, whose muscular powers propelled it, two dark figures, well wrapped in cloaks, the persons who were evidently coming on shore.

"See!" exclaimed the Greek's companion, an Algerine, Hafiz by name, "they will land quite near to us. Will we not be discovered?"

"Very little danger of that," Selim replied. "After they land they will keep to the open ground. What should bring them into this grove?"

"True enough; but, what should bring them on shore at all? and what is this strange vessel?"

"One question is enough without the other," Selim replied. "By my hand, I swear the mystery is too great for me!"

Steadily the boat parted the glistening waves, the drops of spray falling from the bows shining like molten silver.

At last her bow grated on the sandy beach, and the cloaked men landed on the strand.

Although Selim and his companion were quite near enough to the water to distinguish the faces of the strangers, yet the two men had so arranged the hoods of the cloaks they wore that it was impossible for the watchers to get a look at their features.

"What are they?" the Algerine exclaimed, in the ear of the renegade.

The sailors could be plainly distinguished, although the passengers baffled recognition.

"Franks, I think," Selim responded, a little doubtfully, as if he was not quite certain of the fact.

"Are they not Greeks?" asked Hafiz; his keen eyes had detected some peculiarities about the dress of the strangers which led him to this conclusion.

"I think not, and yet—" Selim paused, abruptly.

"They are dressed like Greeks."

"Yet their heads—such heads, I'll swear, never sat on Greek shoulders!" he replied, decidedly.

The two strangers exchanged a few words with the men in the boat, and then came straight up toward the grove.

Hafiz grasped Selim by the arm and drew the long, heavy pistol which he carried.

"Do not be alarmed, and above all avoid hasty action!" Selim cautioned, at the same time drawing his pistol so as to be ready for action. "They do not know that we are here—why should they suspect that any one besides themselves should be abroad at such an hour as this?"

We must keep perfectly quiet; they will pass us by and go on their way; and if they discover us, there are but two of them against us two, for the boat has put to sea again and is pulling for the ship as fast as possible; we shall have the advantage, even if we are discovered, for our weapons are out."

"That's true," the other muttered, and then they both crouched down close to the ground.

The strangers came straight on, evidently intending to enter the thicket at a point not ten feet from where the Greek renegade and his companion with the captive girl were concealed.

Selim chuckled in his sleeve and nudged his companion as the two unknowns walked right by them and their tall figures disappeared amid the dark shadows of the trees.

It was plain that the strangers had no suspicion that any one was concealed within the wood.

Fate seemed resolved that the beautiful English girl should be the prey of the jealous Frenchwoman's passions, and the two abductors felt perfectly secure against the chances of ill-fortune.

But, neither Selim nor his companion knew aught of the subtle drug which the Holy Man had used to insure the senses of the sleeping girl, and as the wily El Tokar had neglected to inform them that, in time, she would recover from the effects of it, and that they must keep their eyes upon her, he supposing that they would naturally do so; therefore, they had not the slightest suspicion that little by little she had been recovering from the stupor into which her senses had been plunged by the use of the powerful drug, and that, awakening to a consciousness of what was passing around her, she had been shrewd enough to remain perfectly quiet and so conceal the fact from the renegade and his companion.

Wonderful self-possession had the English girl and a strong and resolute will; and so, lying perfectly still, listening to the muttered conversation of the two abductors, she formed a plan of escape.

She waited until the two strangers were fairly within the wood; then she sprang suddenly to her feet, and with a shrill cry for help ran rapidly in the direction from whence came the sound of their footsteps.

Who and what the strangers were she knew not, more than what she had gathered from the disjointed remarks which had fallen from the lips of her two captors, but she had faith that, whoever they were, they could not be any worse than the two men into whose hands she had fallen.

For a moment Selim and the Algerine were taken utterly by surprise, for the sudden action on the part of the girl was entirely unexpected by them; but then, realizing that a desperate effort must be made to recapture the maid, they sprang to their feet and dashed after her.

The two strangers halted at the shrill cry on the moment; then, alarmed by the noise of the abductors rushing through the bushes, and believing that an ambuscade was at hand, rushed from the wood back into the open space, drawing their weapons as they ran.

The girl, guided by the sound of their footsteps, followed, and the Greek renegade and the Algerine came close behind.

In the open space, midway between the sea and the wood, the disguised men halted and turned about, prepared to give battle.

The girl rushed to them and fell exhausted at their feet.

"Save me! for the love of Heaven, save me!" she cried.

An exclamation of astonishment came from the lips of the taller of the two as his eyes fell upon the girl; it appeared as if he had recognized her.

Weapons in hand the renegade and his companion had burst from the wood, but, upon beholding the strangers prepared to receive them, they halted.

In truth it did not seem wise for the two to rush upon the leveled weapons of the unknowns.

The boat's crew, too, which had been pulling lustily away from the shore, were at once attracted by the strange scene transpiring upon the strand, and, laying upon their oars, gave earnest heed, ready to return and take a hand in the fray if there was need of their services.

Brave men were the trusty servitors of the Frenchwoman but no idiots to rush to certain death.

They hesitated to advance.

They were two to two, now, but if the boat's crew returned the odds would be overwhelming.

The strangers perceived the indecision of the Moors and were prompt to act upon it.

"Dogs! throw down your arms and yield!" cried the taller of the two in a voice that plainly showed that its owner was a man used to command.

And with the word the two advanced upon the Moors.

A couple of shots Selim and his companion fired, and then, without even waiting to see the effects of their discharge, flung down their long pistols and took to their heels with a swiftness that argued well for their running powers.

A single shot only one of the strangers fired, more to frighten the agile gentlemen than with a thought to harm them, but the pair plunging within the wood were soon lost to sight, although the noise of their progress through the bushes could be heard for a few minutes.

"This is the strangest chance meeting that I ever knew!" the tall stranger exclaimed.

"It is indeed wonderful!"

"The girl will surely believe that it is the finger of fate."

"What will you do with her?"

"She shall decide."

And then the two walked rapidly back to where she stood.

"Have no fear, lady; you are safe," the tall stranger said, and casting aside the hood of his cloak the lion-head of the Lion Captain appeared.

CHAPTER XII.

AN ATTACK IN FORCE.

A CRY of amazement broke from the lips of the girl as she recognized her preserver.

"The Lion Captain!" she cried, filled with wonder at the unexpected meeting.

"The same, lady, and your poor servant ever," the unknown replied, with a gallant bow.

"Heaven seems to will that we should meet in strange places," the maiden observed.

"Heaven seems to will that I should be the humble instrument to rescue you from deadly peril!" the Lion Captain answered. "On the sea I warned and would have saved you, but you were deaf to remonstrances and rushed blindly to your fate, but now that chance a second time has placed you in my power, I trust you will listen to my words and allow me to place you in safety, far beyond the reach of your enemies."

"Among whom you count my father?"

"Alas! it grieves me to say that he, who should be your protector against all, I am forced to consider the worst enemy this world holds for you," the Lion-head replied, and it was plain from the way in which he spoke that it pained him to make the disclosure.

"Ah, you are so strangely prejudiced against that unfortunate man!" the lady declared, with evident feeling.

"Would to Heaven that such was the case, but it is not."

"You are not rightly informed in regard to his designs!"

"You will discover one of these days that I am only too well informed; but, enough of this; why should I persist in warning you when you disregard my words? It is but useless labor. Be it my task in the future to watch over you as diligently as possible and leave to cruel events the disagreeable performance of proving to you how unworthy your sire is of the trust that you repose in him. But, tell me how comes it that I find you in the power of these Moors, and without the walls of Algiers?"

"Indeed I can hardly explain," the lady replied. "In dreamy meditation this evening I cast myself, all clothed as you behold me now, upon a divan; to the meditation succeeded sleep—a sweet sleep, full of pleasant images; how long in this state of repose I lingered I know not, but the bright dreams were abruptly put to flight at last, and then a sensation as if I was strangling succeeded; I seemed to be swimming in a sea, as black to the eye as a gloomy coffin's pall; then, within my head, a huge wheel seemed to revolve at tremendous speed, and at every revolution a shower of bright and glittering sparks were cast off. From this I passed into a stupor like death, and I knew nothing more until a few minutes ago my senses returned slowly to me and I found myself lying upon a hillock within the wood yonder gazing up at the starry skies. I believe the life I have led has given me unusual self-possession, for though my senses returned to me and I fully realized that I was the victim of some terrible plot yet I refrained from crying out—in fact lay like one bereft of speech and listened to the conversation of the two men who were apparently the authors of the outrage.

From their words I learned that strangers were near at hand. I chose my time, made a bold dash for liberty, and you know the rest."

The Lion Captain was sorely puzzled at the recital, although well versed in all the intrigues of the infamous court of Algiers.

"Have you seen the Dey yet?" he asked.

"No."

"That is strange! I expected you would be presented, almost immediately."

"You wrong my father!" the girl again protested; "he does not design that I shall fall the prey of this insolent Moslem. He has far higher and better views for me."

The Lion-head regarded her for a moment evidently surprised.

"Higher views!" he exclaimed; "is the throne of Abou Hassan then tottering on its base—the scepter trembling in his hand, and is some ambitious soul plotting in secret to overthrow the Dey? El Boro controls the army; possibly he has undermined their loyalty so that he can pledge them as he lists in the event of a struggle? If the army is solid at his back possibly he can say who shall be master of the city. But, what say you to this scheme? Are you willing to be used as a lure to attract some ambitious soul to seize the deyship of Algiers?"

The girl flushed scarlet at the plainly put question; for a moment she seemed confused, but soon she raised her head and looked proudly at the keen and blunt questioner.

"I will not give myself to any one unless my heart sanctions the choice, and when I love I shall not care for the station of the man; he may be as high in rank as any king on earth or as lowly in station as the simplest sailor in the English fleet; it will be all one to me. I am not for sale by anybody or to any one, or at any price."

Here the companion of the Lion-head broke in, speaking for the first time.

"Pardon, sir, but the boat is on the beach waiting your orders."

The boat's crew attracted by the fight had put back again to the shore.

"A moment, and they shall have them," the captain replied, and then again he turned to the lady. "Please you to decide as to your future course," he said. "Will you accept the protection of my pretty ship yonder, or will you return to Algiers?"

"Return to Algiers?" she repeated, mechanically, as though pondering over the question.

"Yes, if my surmise is correct, you were brought from the city by means of a certain secret passage which, tunneling a way under the city walls, has its exit in the wood, yonder. Myself and companion were about to enter the city by way of the secret passage when your cries for help attracted our attention. By the aid of the underground way we can put you right back into the Dey's palace itself—into the very apartment from whence you came."

Fully believing that she had penetrated the secret of the Lion Captain, and that, if she wished, she could call him by name, his knowledge of the mysteries of Algiers did not surprise her in the least.

"Take me back to my father," she said, at last; "and, sir, I assure you upon my honor, that you have wronged him by your suspicions. He is much better—not half so black as you have painted him."

"For your sake I hope so," the Lion-head replied, earnestly, but a certain something in his tone plainly revealed that he had no faith that such would be the case. Then he turned to the boat:

"Bend to your oars and make for the ship," he commanded.

Obedient to the word the oarsmen headed for the ship.

"And now, lady, if you will accept my arm, we will proceed onward to our destination," he continued.

The lady at once accepted the invitation, and the three proceeded toward the wood.

About one-half the distance that intervened between the spot where they had stood and the shrubbery that marked the confines of the wood, they had traversed, when, suddenly, a troop of Moorish horsemen who, concealed by the grove, had advanced with noiseless caution, burst around the edge of the wood and with loud cries rode rapidly forward.

There were thirty Moors at least, and so cunningly had they managed their advance and attack the assailed ones saw at a glance that escape was impossible.

No hope could be expected from the boat's crew, either, for they had made rapid progress out to sea, and even if they could have returned in time to take an active part in the fight,

the odds were so fearfully against them they could not have hoped to beat off the Algerines.

"Resistance is useless!" cried the Lion-head, quickly, as he beheld the advancing force, and then, with wonderful dexterity he doffed the lion head and dropped it in a clump of bushes which happened to be right behind him. He stooped to execute this maneuver, and so concealed the action from the sight of the advancing foe.

And when he rose again, his head hooded in the cloak-cap, any one would have been puzzled to have told him from his companion.

With loud cries the Algerines rode up, brandishing their weapons, growing more and more savage in their bearing as they discovered that the men upon whom they were advancing in such warlike array did not manifest any intention of resisting.

At the head of the Moors rode the Greek renegade, Selim, and his companion, the doughty Hafiz, who had fled with such vigor but a short time before.

By a lucky chance the two in their headlong flight had encountered an escort troop returning from up the coast, and had at once made known the landing of the two strangers upon the beach, and suggested their surprise and capture.

"Glory to Allah!" cried the leader of the horsemen, flourishing his curved saber in triumph; "you are our prisoners! Yield, Christian dogs, or die!"

The maiden with characteristic modesty had veiled her face with the folds of the light cloak she wore, and so her dazzling beauty did not excite attention.

"We surrender," said one of the men, but whether it was the Lion-head or the other, the girl was puzzled to decide, for, as she had noticed before, their voices were strangely alike, and they were also very much alike in appearance.

The lady fancied that it was not the Lion-head, but his companion, although it was always the other who took the lead, but the Algerines naturally took the speaker to be the prominent man of the two.

The Moors disarmed the prisoners, and then one of the horsemen happening to pass through the clump of bushes, discovered the lion's head which the Lion Captain had essayed to conceal.

Great was the wonder of the horsemen as the fellow held up the strange head-dress.

One of the prisoners, then, was the great Greek pirate; but which one? That was the question!

CHAPTER XIII.

WHICH IS WHICH?

"THE Lion of the Sea!" cried the renegade, and the rest of the horsemen echoed the exclamation.

Not a man was there in the party but knew the Greek sea-rover by reputation; hence, great was their glee at the unexpected capture.

And Selim and his companion, too, understood now the character of the strange ship which had, in the darkness and silence of the night, run in so close to the Algerine coast.

A proud feather, indeed, it was in the caps of them all to have achieved so great a capture and secured so valuable a prize.

"We are all made men!" cried the captain in command of the party. "The Dey, our great and mighty master, will surely give us a capful of gold apiece, to say nothing of other honors, when we present this dog of a Greek pirate to him."

"You are quite right!" Selim chimed in. "At this present moment, I've no doubt that our illustrious master, the Dey, would gladly give a turban full of diamonds for the Lion of the Sea, dead or alive. Why, fellow-soldiers, this rascally pirate had the daring to give battle on the high seas to the mighty Ali, of the Blue Beard!"

A hum of wonder resounded on the air at this announcement; the fight with Ali was news to the soldiers.

"Ah, indeed, it is the truth," Selim continued; "nor is that the worst of it. He sunk Ali's vessel after a hard and bloody fight—actually whipped the great pasha, the terror of the ocean, and sent him home like a drowned rat to tell the story of the slaughter."

In wonder the soldiers looked upon each other, and then gazed curiously upon the two tall, dark figures, standing as motionless as statues, their faces masked by the hoods of the heavy cloaks which they wore.

"But, thanks to our good swords, the career of this pirate will be brought to a sudden close!" the captain of the horsemen exclaimed, grandiloquently, as though it were a deed of desperate

daring for some thirty to assault and capture two.

"This is the prisoner of whom I told you," the renegade said, pointing to the lady. "Myself and comrade were conveying her through the wood, when we were assailed by this Lion-head and forced to fly for our lives."

"By the beard of the Prophet, my brother, you and your fellow are not made of the stuff that warriors are composed of, or else, being two to two, you would not have allowed yourselves to be overcome," cried the captain, valiantly.

"Ah, but he had a boat's crew, ten men or more, at his back," Selim explained.

"Oh, that alters the case, then."

"Well, your fortune is made by this capture, captain; and I envy you!" the renegade exclaimed, and as he spoke, the soldier, impressed by his words, swelled out like a turkey-cock. "And now, with your permission, I and my comrade will take our prisoner, this slave, and depart, while you go to Algiers and claim the rich reward that awaits you."

"Certainly; and if I thrive, friend Selim, rest assured I shall not forget that I owed the lucky chance to you," the soldier replied; already, in his mind's eye, the captain beheld himself promoted to one of the high offices of the state, and ruling in almost kingly grandeur over a host of meaner creatures.

"Thanks; I shall remember to remind you of the promise," the renegade remarked, and then he advanced toward the lady.

She, perceiving the movement, and determined at all hazards to escape from her captors, stepped suddenly forward and addressed the captain of the troop.

"Do not believe this man!" she cried. "I am not a slave, but the daughter of the Minister of War, the great and mighty pasha, El Boro! I am the victim of a foul and most horrid plot. This man in my sleep abducted me from the apartments of my father in the Kasbah—the palace of the Dey. For some deep and awful purpose he is carrying me away, and I call upon you as a soldier and a man to lend no aid to his base design! Carry me with you to the city—return me to the arms of my great and powerful father, and claim your own reward."

The soldiers listened in amazement, and as for the captain, his eyes fairly stuck out with wonder.

The Lion of the Sea so suddenly unmasked was a great surprise, indeed, but in the same haul of the net, as it were, to bring up a lady claiming to be the daughter of the stern El Boro, was truly wonderful!

Selim, the renegade, was a crafty fellow; few men in or around the palace more cunning than he, a fact well proven by the trust that the Frenchwoman confided to him, for she was a shrewd judge of human nature and rarely made a mistake in regard to her tools; and he at once set to work to parry this unexpected blow.

He shrugged his shoulders, smiled and then winked significantly to the captain; and the soldier, thoroughly perplexed, blinked like an owl in wonder, not being able to make head or tail of the renegade's actions.

Then Selim addressed the lady:

"Oh, yes, most noble lady, we will return you to your great father—whom may the angels of Allah forever preserve!—at once. We will set out without delay. And pardon, most noble lady, that, unlucky wretch that I am! I should so far forget your august station, and the respect due to your rank, as to speak of you as a prisoner and a slave. I am but a rude soldier and not used to deal with ladies of rank." Then he turned and spoke rapidly in the ear of the astonished and bewildered captain: "The slave is mad. She fancies that she is the daughter of the great El Boro—forced her way to his presence in the palace this evening, and because he denied her she drew a dagger and would have slain him on the spot but that the guards seized and disarmed her, and I am now charged with the duty of conveying her to the Emperor's Fort where she is to be kept."

All the Oriental races have a sort of superstitious reverence for the afflicted ones bereft of reason, and they regard them in the light of wards of the Prophet; therefore the soldier, never doubting for an instant the tale of the renegade, at once fell into the snare.

"Fear not, most noble lady; you shall not be harmed, but instantly restored to the arms of your great father, the great El Boro, Algiers's greatest captain on either land or sea," he said.

"You will save me from this man?" the lady cried, pointing to Selim, her suspicions having

been excited by the whispered conference between the two.

"Oh, yes; this soldier is an honest man," the captain replied. "He has explained to me that he is mistaken in regard to you, and that you are not the person he supposed you to be." In this lame and impotent way the horseman endeavored to lull the suspicions of the girl to sleep.

"I will not go with him but to you I will trust myself," she exclaimed, firmly. "If you return me to my father's care your reward will be a rich one, but if you betray me, rest assured my father will find a way to make you pay dearly for it!"

"Have no fear; trust to me and you shall be placed in safety."

Despite the fair words there was something in the tone of the speaker which excited the distrust of the girl. But she was helpless in the power of these rude soldiers; what could she do but submit to go with them, in the hope that their actions might not belie their words?

Just at this juncture the hoof-strokes of horses sounded on the still air of the night.

The soldiers grasped their weapons, but Selim instantly allayed the alarm by explaining that in all probability the horsemen were the members of his own troop who had come forth from the city in search of him.

The guess of the renegade was correct, as was at once proved when the new-comers rode round the corner of the wood.

They had two spare horses with them, so as to accommodate Selim and his companion.

"We had better depart at once," the renegade suggested in the ear of the soldier. "Let one of your men take the girl upon the saddle before him, and after we get in motion and my fellows turn off, let him follow—you can lend me one of them until to-morrow!"

"Oh, yes, of course."

"I shall be a thousand times obliged."

"Don't mention it!" the other rejoined, instantly. "You have put fortune in my grasp to-night. But, I say, which one of these fellows is the Lion?"

"That is more than I know; make them remove their cloaks, the dress will probably reveal the master."

"A good idea."

And in obedience to the captain's command the dark cloaks were removed. To the astonishment of all, the men were dressed like Moors—looked like Moors—in fact, could have walked the streets of Algiers unchallenged, so closely they resembled the native-born Algerine.

"Now by the hand of great Allah! but this is wonderful!" the captain exclaimed, and a low grunt from the lips of the troopers proved that they agreed with their leader.

The two prisoners were much alike in the face; both wore dark hair; both were deeply bronzed by the sun, and neither in dress or bearing betrayed a superiority to the other.

"Well, well," murmured the captain, perplexed, "which one of you two is the famous Greek pirate, the Lion of the Seas?"

The men laughed; they looked upon the matter as a joke apparently.

Then rose the wrath of the doughty Moor.

"Now by the beard of great Mahomet!" he swore, "laugh not or I'll slice off your heads like so many turnips. It is no laughing matter, as you will both find before you are an hour older, or else may I never draw a sword again. Answer my question, you cutthroat dogs! Which one of you two is the Greek pirate?"

"Neither, so please your high and mighty excellency, most illustrious of captains," one of the two answered. "We are simply poor fishermen from Tunis who have been blown off the coast."

CHAPTER XIV.

BEFORE THE DEY.

"It is a lie!" cried the renegade, quickly. "With my own eyes I beheld them disembark from the ship of the pirate. See! yonder she still hovers in the offing!" and the Greek pointed seaward, where sure enough the spars of the unknown, mysterious craft could be detected.

"True, every word, illustrious master," persisted the one who had first spoken, and he bowed lowly, carrying out the character of the Moorish fisherman to the life. "It is just as I have told you. We were blown off the coast, picked up by the vessel yonder—"

"The Greek pirate!" cried Selim, eagerly.

"Mayhap it may be that she is the vessel of the pirate for all that I do know," he replied. "We are of Tunis, honest men and innocent of guile."

"Where is your boat?" cried the captain of the troop, suddenly, thinking that he had the speaker in a trap.

"Run down in the night by yonder vessel and sunk, and that is how we came to be on board of her. In the darkness she smashed us all to pieces. Myself and comrade saved our lives and escaped a watery grave by seizing hold of the bow-chains and by their aid clambering on board."

"This tale is all a lie!" declared the renegade, abruptly, "and we are losing time in listening to it. Bring them before the Dey at once and let his wisdom decide which of these two is the Lion of the Sea."

"Well spoken, friend Selim!" the captain remarked, with a sagacious shake of the head.

"That one of these two is the Lion-head is quite plain to me, but which one it is, is far too much for me to attempt to decide, therefore we'll away for the city at once."

"And the quicker we are off the better," the renegade observed, "for I fancy that yonder ship is heading toward the land again."

The keen eyes of the Greek had served him truly, for the ship had really changed her course and instead of beating out to sea was standing straight in toward the shore.

"And, hark ye! attempt not to resist us or it will be the worse for you!" warned the captain, addressing the prisoners, and bristling up furiously, in order to terrify them.

"Resist?" cried the other prisoner, who had not taken part in the conversation before; "why, most noble and illustrious general, we had no idea of resisting, now that we know who and what you are. Of course at first we grasped our arms, for we took you and your men for some of those wild demons of the desert, those thieves of Arabs, who delight in robbing and stripping innocent and upright men."

As consummate an actor as the other this one, for he too played the part of a simple-minded fisherman to the life, but the moment he spoke the lady, who had hung as it were upon his accents, knew that he was the bold man who had risked so much for her.

The troop at once prepared to depart. The two prisoners were placed on horses, each one singly before a stalwart trooper and tightly bound to him with a long scarf, so that escape seemed almost hopeless.

A third soldier took the lady up before him, and then the captain gave the word and the troop rode rapidly around the skirts of the wood.

If the men on board of the ship had perceived the attack and capture and were hastening to the rescue, this move on the part of the Algerines rendered such a thing impossible.

Five minutes' sharp trot brought the party to the highway leading from the western gate of the city to the Emperor's Fort, the palace of the Frenchwoman, and the upper towns along the coast.

And when the highway was reached, at a signal from Selim, his men and the soldier who bore the lady before him on the saddle detached themselves from the rest, and turning abruptly to the right showed Algiers their back, and rode directly up the coast.

A shrill scream came from the lips of the hapless girl when this movement was executed, for she fully realized that she had been betrayed into the hands of her enemies.

"Help, help! in the name of Heaven save me!" she cried.

But what avail were a woman's feeble cries?

Ruthless, and as stern in their purpose as grim death itself, the troopers rode on, not even turning their heads at the sound of the helpless girl's voice.

Even the prisoners seemed stolid, except that the lines on their faces deepened, and the muscles of their mouths were compressed.

Soon the cries of the captive maid died away, for in obedience to the command of the renegade the soldier with whom she rode wound a scarf around her head, thus in a measure stifling her cries.

"Tell me," said one of the prisoners to the soldier to whom he was bound, speaking cautiously so as not to be overheard by the rest of the troop, "who is the man in command of the other party?"

"Selim," grunted the trooper, who was a good-natured sort of a fellow and who saw no harm in answering the question.

"Selim?" repeated the prisoner.

"Yes, Selim, the Greek renegade; he is the right-hand man of the wonderful, gazelle-eyed Gulnare, the Beautiful, the sunlight of our great Dey's harem."

A long-drawn breath came from between the

firm-set teeth of the questioner as the soldier spoke.

Only too well did he understand the nature of the peril which threatened the unfortunate girl. The reputation of the queen of the harem was well known to him; merciless by nature—more tiger-cat than woman, he knew that she would not hesitate at any means and at any cost to remove a rival from her path.

In some way Gulnare had learned of the arrival in the city of the beautiful English girl, and at once her jealous fears had jumped to the conclusion that in the stranger she would find a dangerous rival, and so she had planned to abduct her before she should be brought before the Dey.

And, to what fate would jealous Gulnare consign the girl when once her eyes rested upon the beauty of her almost perfect face?

Had not the prisoner been a man of wonderful nerve, and one used to concealing his emotions behind a stony face, he would have groaned aloud in anguish as these thoughts floated through his brain, and he reflected upon the terrible peril that menaced the lady. And he was helpless, too, to aid her now. Cruel Fortune had frowned and fate itself seemed leagued against him.

The walls of Algiers were soon reached, the sleepy warder roused to uncloset the gates, and then passing through the portal the heavy gates clanged to, and the Lion Captain was fairly within the grasp of his foes.

The Moorish captain was too well acquainted with the habits of the Algerine Dey to venture to disturb him at such an hour, though bearing with him such a prize, and he was cunning, too, this lowly captain, and he knew right well that if any of the great ones of the court discovered how important was the capture he had made, the chances were large that they would attempt to ignore him in the matter altogether and lay claim to the credit of the deed themselves. Therefore the captain cautioned his men and instructed them not to breathe a word to a soul in regard to the prize which they had secured, and with his troop proceeded to their barracks, where they remained until the hour of ten next morning, at which time the Dey was usually visible; then he proceeded with his troop, the prisoners in the center, to the palace.

With a grand flourish the captain demanded admittance to the royal presence.

"I bring a most important prisoner!" he declared, "and must have immediate speech with his serene highness."

Now, although the officers of the palace looked with disdain upon the plainly-attired prisoners, and with sundry incredulous gestures indicated their disbelief in the captain's statement, yet they did not dare to refuse his request, for the Dey, like all the Eastern rulers, often found time to hang heavy on his hands, and was never sorry when some interruption to the regular order of things occurred.

Therefore, with great ceremony the captain and his troop was ushered into the great hall of state.

The Dey sat in his place as usual; by his side, amid the other officers in immediate attendance upon the royal person, was the crafty "Holy Man," but El Boro, the minister of war, was missing.

Early that morning, for the renegade Englishman was no sluggard, he had discovered the absence of his daughter, and at once set out in search of her.

The captain, ushered into the presence of the ruler of Algiers, at once advanced to the throne and humbly prostrated himself before it.

"All glory to your illustrious highness, Algiers's great Dey, the ruler of the world!" he cried, after the Oriental fashion; "and confusion to your enemies, whether they be on land or sea! Your humble slave, with his own right arm, has performed a mighty deed and vanquished a foe who has long dared to brave the displeasure of your royal frown."

The Dey glanced from the speaker to the prisoners, and he was somewhat puzzled at the grandiloquent tone of the speaker, for the unknown captives stood quietly gazing around them with placid faces, evidently, if one could judge from their features, not at all affected by their position.

If the prisoners were criminals their self-composure was astonishing.

"Allah be thanked that I am so well served!" the Dey exclaimed.

"Terror of the land and ocean, your poor servant gives into your royal hands the mighty Greek pirate, the Lion of the Sea!"

All within the hall started at the announcement; the captain rose to his feet, made a sign

to one of the soldiers, and the fellow, advancing, drew from under his cloak the grizzly lion-head and laid it down before the feet of the Algerine monarch, who stared in amazement at the strange sight.

"By the beard of the Prophet! this is most wonderful!" the Moor exclaimed.

And the whispered title, "the Lion of the Sea," went round the hall from lip to lip.

Great was the exultation of all.

"And which one of these two is the Lion Captain, the Greek pirate? Let him step forth!" cried the Dey.

CHAPTER XV.

A FINAL TRIAL.

NEITHER one of the two men moved.

"Dogs!" cried the Algerine ruler in a rage, "do you dare to brave my wrath? Let him who calls himself the Lion of the Sea step forth at once, or on his head will I launch the weight of my royal displeasure!"

The Moor was somewhat illogical in this threat, for until he discovered which was the Greek it would be impossible to punish him.

"Pardon me, light of the world!" exclaimed one of the men, stepping forward and prostrating himself before the throne. "Your illustrious highness is deceived, as is also this noble captain," and then, in a plain, straightforward manner, he related the tale which he had told the Algerine officer. Plain, honest fishermen, he claimed that both he and his companion were, blown by contrary winds off the coast of Tunis, then at sea picked up by the unknown ship, which, as he frankly confessed, was no doubt the ship of the notorious Greek pirate, but as to there being any connection between the pirate and himself and companion, why, the idea was absurd.

"But the lion-head?" cried the Dey, pointing to the grim and fantastic disguise.

"We know nothing of it," the man answered, humbly. "This noble captain will tell you that we had it not."

Thus called upon the officer was forced to admit that some of his men had found the lion-head hidden within a clump of bushes near to the spot where the prisoners had been taken, but ended by confidently asserting his belief that one of the captives had placed it there.

"Confess!" cried the Dey, loudly, and with anger in his tones; "confess, and so save yourselves from the consequences of my wrath. One of you is the Greek pirate; let the other speak and reveal which he is, and so save himself from fearful torture."

And then the other prisoner stepped forward and bowed his head before the throne.

"I am the man you seek; let my companion go free!"

"No, no!" cried the other, springing to his feet; "I am the man; take me and let him go!"

In dire perplexity all within the council hall stared at this unlooked-for announcement.

There was but one Greek pirate, but lo! here were two!

"Base sons of unclean dogs!" roared the Dey, in a rage. "Am I bereft of reason that you think to impose on me in this way? First, you declare that you know nothing of the Lion of the Sea; and then, in the next breath, each claims to be the man. Inshallah! you shall both die, and there is an end to the matter!"

"Most illustrious monarch!" cried El Tokar, a brilliant idea occurring to him. "Summon great Ali of the Blue Beard; he knows the pirate—he has met him in single fight—he can easily tell which of these two men is the true Greek."

"By the white tomb of our holy Prophet!" averred the Algerine monarch, "there is wisdom in your thought. Let great Ali be called at once."

Pasha Blue Beard was not far off; he came in haste at the Dey's call, and when the nature of the business was explained to him, he at once declared that no doubt he could detect the pirate at a glance; but when he came to examine the two men, who bore the scrutiny unflinchingly, the veteran sea-rover was puzzled; he shook his head gravely, and was about to declare that in his judgment neither one was the famous Lion Captain, when, happening to glance at the Algerine ruler, he saw an expression upon Abou Hassan's face that warned him that he was expected to identify one of the men, and so, like a skillful courtier, he at once laid his hand upon the shoulder of the man nearest to him, and exclaimed:

"By my head! I believe this is the man!"

El Tokar, in the meanwhile, had been whispering words of counsel in the ear of the Dey, and so when Ali had declared his opinion, the

Dey proceeded to put into execution the plan that the wily Holy Man had suggested to him.

"Let the prisoners be removed at once to the dungeon and placed in separate cells, and under pain of death let no man hold communication with either of them."

The order of the Algerine monarch was obeyed at once.

Dark and gloomy indeed were the cells to which the captives were conducted. Men of iron they seemed to be, for neither one uttered even a word against the harsh command.

Into these damp and noisome dens the blessed light of the all-glorious sun never came; so chill the air—so foul the vapors that arose on all sides, that few prisoners ever spent many hours as captives to the Dey without showing traces of these terrible dungeons for many years afterward.

The prisoners were placed in separate cells; the heavy doors clanged to; the rusty bolts shot home in their sockets, and they were left to their own meditations.

But not for long, for within fifteen minutes the guards conducted El Tokar along the dark passage, and behind him came two dark and sinister forms; negroes, black as jet, and bearing ominous silken cords in their hands.

One used to the Algerine court would, at a glance, have recognized these two dark, muscular men. They were the stranglers, the stern ministers alike of justice and of vengeance.

El Tokar paused at the portal of the dungeon where the first prisoner was confined. The jailer unlocked the door and the Holy Man entered, the stranglers remaining without.

The captive sat on a low stool, the only piece of furniture within the cell, gazing wistfully up at the little window, through which, between its bars, the light stole in.

The fat and greasy Moor came close up to the prisoner and peered with eager curiosity into his face; the captive, with a questioning glance, returned the look.

"It is an unpleasant duty that I come upon," the Algerine remarked, with a shake of the head.

"Yes?" said the prisoner, questioning.

"Without the door wait the chief stranglers of the court."

"The stranglers?"

"You are doomed to die."

"It is Allah's will," replied the other, with true Moslem indifference, but there was a peculiar glitter in his eyes which gave the lie to the speech.

El Tokar was not a keen observer, and did not notice it.

"Ali, of the Blue Beard, has said that your companion is the Lion Captain; is it true?"

"No, it is not."

"You are the Greek pirate then?"

"Bah! what nonsense!" exclaimed the prisoner, impatiently. "If the Dey had the wits of dog he could have seen at once that Ali Pasha knew neither of us, but he feared to speak the truth."

"Well, be that as it may, the Dey has determined to give both of you to death, so whichever one of you is the Greek his vengeance will be satisfied; but if you are only honest fishermen, as you claim, why did both of you own to being the Greek?" the Holy Man asked, shrewdly. A smile came over the dark face of the captive.

"Old friends are we, great lord, and willingly either one of us would peril much to help the other."

El Tokar shook his head, doubtfully; this sort of thing he could not understand at all, for such sentiments were entirely foreign to his nature; not to have saved his own father from peril would he have taken the slightest bit of blame upon his shoulders, broad and fat as they were.

"Oh, no, my friend, I cannot believe that story," the Holy Man replied. "I am not quite such a fool as that. I have lived some time in this world and never yet have I seen a man willing to suffer for another."

A look of contempt passed across the features of the captive, but he did not trouble himself to reply.

"And now at this moment, with death staring you in the face, you have power to avert your fate if you are only inclined to act like a sensible man," El Tokar continued. "My royal master, the Dey, would give much to really know the truth in regard to the Greek pirate, for to strangle the Lion-head quietly in his dungeon is very small satisfaction, considering that the fellow has destroyed the best frigate in our navy."

"Ah, yes, I see; the great and munificent ruler of the sea and land would like to make a public show of the man whom accident placed

within his power; he would like to exhibit him to the gaping crowd in the public square and give the shouting multitude a chance to exult over the downfall of the man who, on the sea, had laughed to scorn the power of Algiers."

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed El Tokar, rubbing his hands gleefully as he spoke, as though already he was gloating over and enjoying the scene of triumph.

"Well, I can hardly blame the Dey," the prisoner added. "It would be too bad to miss such a raree show."

"True, true; you will speak then?" cried the Holy Man, eagerly, not able to repress his delight.

"Oh, yes, I'll speak."

"Your companion—"

"Yes."

"Is the Greek pirate?"

"No, no more than I am," replied the captive, laughing in the face of the baffled Moor.

"Beware! Remember the stranglers!"

"Bah! I laugh at your threats! Call in your murderers! A man can die but once!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RIVALS.

STRAIGHT for the palace of the Frenchwoman the renegade rode with his beautiful captive.

Although he had fully succeeded in his expedition, yet the mind of Selim was ill at ease. True the girl was helpless in his power, yet there had been altogether too much publicity attending the capture. She had loudly proclaimed in the hearing of the soldiers that she was the daughter of the powerful minister of war, El Boro, and although he had attempted to weaken the force of the announcement by quietly stating that she was a harmless madwoman, yet the odds were great that some cunning dog of a trooper would take it into his head to seek out El Boro and tell him of the strange adventure on the sands.

But, as well as though he was her second self, the renegade knew the character of his mistress; her orders were at all hazards to bring the English girl to the palace beyond the walls of the city, and Selim knew that it was as much as his life was worth to attempt to disobey. Yet on the other hand, by obeying he took upon himself the bold part of braving the anger of the powerful El Boro; something not lightly to be incurred, for the stern minister of war was a dangerous man when roused to action. The renegade was in a dilemma; was his mistress, the Frenchwoman, powerful enough to protect him from the rage of El Boro, or would he, the humble instrument, be sacrificed in the event of open war between the man whose daughter he had stolen and the woman whose orders he had so faithfully obeyed?

Selim, like a prudent man, kept his own counsel and said nothing to his companions of his fears, but a hundred times during the short ride from the beach to the palace he cursed the evil chance which had so publicly connected him with the abduction of the girl.

"By my head!" muttered Selim, as the walls of the palace rose fair before him, "I think that I had better ask leave of absence and decamp for awhile until this affair blows over, otherwise I fear that I may suffer. My lady is powerful; El Boro is powerful, too, and in the event of a desperate quarrel there is no telling who would get the best of it or how it might end. Decidedly I will transfer my precious person elsewhere for a short time."

And as the renegade came to this wise conclusion he drew rein in front of the palace.

All was in readiness to receive him; the gates opened instantly and after the party passed through closed with a hollow clang. Now surely was the hapless girl completely helpless in the power of her enemy. What arm strong enough to tear her from the gripe of this female tiger, with the paws of velvet and claws of steel?

An apartment had been prepared for the reception of the maid and she was at once placed in it.

The luxury-loving Frenchwoman had not troubled herself to remain awake to await the arrival of her prey, so fully confident was she that the renegade would succeed in his enterprise.

Gulnare usually rose late, and on the morning succeeding the girl's arrival she was later than ever, much to Selim's disgust, for he was up betimes, eager to relate the success of his mission, receive his reward and be gone, for with every new minute he feared to hear the angry hand of El Boro knocking loudly at the gate.

At last the Frenchwoman arose; performed her toilet, which took some time, for Gulnare

was not as young as she once was, and to efface the marks of old Father Time's withering hand required skill, care and patience. Then she breakfasted—no careless, hasty meal, for the Frenchwoman was an epicure by nature; and all this time Selim was cooling his heels in the anteroom and swearing under his breath in a most ferocious manner. Every now and then, too, he would saunter to the window which commanded a view of the road to Algiers and glance nervously out of it, as if he expected to see the dark minister of war at the head of a powerful force riding straight, with hostile intent, toward the palace.

At last the Frenchwoman was graciously pleased to indicate that she was ready to receive him, and the renegade hastened to her presence.

Gulnare listened with languid indifference to his story of the expedition, and when he expressed his fears that some one of the soldiers might hasten to El Boro and inform him of the circumstance she laughed in contempt.

"Well, well!" she exclaimed, "what if he does know that I have had his daughter carried off?"

"He may be mad enough to attempt by force to take her from you," Selim suggested.

"You are right; he would be mad to attempt such a thing!" she replied, haughtily. "I wish an English girl to wait upon me and this child pleases me and that is all there is about it."

"Might not my lord, the Dey, be displeased that you should select the daughter of his chief counselor?" the renegade said, humbly.

"The Dey is my slave, and it is not the first time I have stretched out my hand to brush a rival from my path!"

Selim perceived that the Frenchwoman was bent upon carrying out her purpose, and that remonstrances would only provoke her anger, and so prudently he abstained, but with great tact he presented his petition for a short leave of absence.

No one's fool was the imperious Gulnare, and therefore at once she guessed the reason why Selim desired to go.

"So, so, you are afraid!" she exclaimed. "Oh, no, Master Selim; I cannot spare you; you are too useful to me. Besides, in this matter, if El Boro is more powerful than I think he is, and I find that he is likely to gain the advantage over me, why, I can easily enough retreat from my position by giving him the girl, swearing that you were all to blame in the matter, and allowing him to seize you as a victim."

The renegade trembled from head to heel and his face became deathly white.

"Oh, most powerful mistress!" he cried, "surely you would not sacrifice your faithful servant?"

"Faithful?" she replied, in contempt; "and you wish to desert me in the moment of danger!"

Selim was about to stammer out an excuse, but the Frenchwoman stopped him with an imperious wave of her hand.

"Enough!" she cried; "you can take your choice; go and join El Boro and see if he is powerful enough to protect you from my anger—"

"Oh, noble mistress!" he exclaimed, "not for the world would I encounter your resentment. I merely wished for a few days to attend to some business along the coast—"

"And give time for this affair to blow over!" she interrupted, quickly. "No, no; in this matter you are either for or against me; there can be no middle course."

The rogue saw that he was in a trap, and so resolved to put a good face upon the matter.

"Oh, no, most noble mistress; I will follow thy fortunes and seek to serve no other."

"Wisely decided!" she exclaimed, with a toss of her imperious head; "and now, bring in the girl and let me see what she is like."

Selim withdrew, to find the maid in her prison apartment, calm and self-possessed; no trace of agitation in her manner, no fear upon her face. A bold and dauntless heart had this English girl.

"You are to follow me," announced the officer, briefly.

The maid inclined her head; resistance in such a case was fruitless; besides, now she would learn the reason why this outrage upon her liberty had been committed.

Selim conducted the girl at once to the apartment of the Frenchwoman, and Gulnare, reclining upon her soft couch, looked with eager eyes upon the marvelous beauty of the maid.

Yes, indeed, she was beautiful. Even the jealous tiger-cat of a woman had to admit the

fact, as, with her angry, envious eyes, she looked upon the fresh young beauty of the peerless English girl.

Uncertain truly would be her power over the fickle heart of the turbaned ruler of Algiers if this matchless woman chose to exercise her fascinations.

"Well, young lady, no doubt you are surprised at the strange situation in which you find yourself," Gulnare at length remarked.

"I am."

"What is your name?"

"Cleora Craven."

"You are the daughter of El Boro, the renegade Englishman?"

"I am his daughter," Cleora replied, her lips trembling, for the word renegade applied to her father pained her much, for she knew that he deserved the title.

"Do you know that your father has destined you for a most vile purpose?" asked Gulnare, bluntly.

"No; I do not know it."

"He intends that you shall become an inmate of the Dey's harem. Your father is minister of war, and has been the chief counselor of the Dey, but he finds his power is on the wane, and in order to find new favor with his royal master he sacrifices you."

"You are wrong; he has no such purpose in view!" Cleora replied, firmly, although this accusation, now for the second time repeated to her ears, troubled her greatly.

"Oh, of course, silly child, he has not unfolded his plans to you, but I know them well enough, and therefore I have attempted to save you from a fate which, to an honest English girl, must be worse than death. You can remain here with me. No one will know that you are here. I need a companion, and you shall live like a princess."

"And who are you?" asked the girl, a peculiar look in her large eyes.

"I am Gulnare, the Queen of the Harem," replied the Frenchwoman, proudly.

"Oh! and you are afraid that I will take your place!" exclaimed Cleora, in scorn.

Before the enraged Frenchwoman could open her mouth to reply, an attendant came hastily into the room.

"Your highness, an armed body of men are at the gate!" he cried.

CHAPTER XVII.

A STERN DEMAND.

AN expression of joy passed rapidly over the face of the English girl. An armed force knocking at the gate of her prison—did not that mean release?

Transient as was the expression it did not escape the keen eyes of the Frenchwoman, and it only served to inflame the anger which burned in her heart the more.

The same thought which had come to the girl had also occurred to her. Had El Boro learned thus quickly the whereabouts of his daughter and come in arms to claim her?

"He would not dare!" she murmured to herself, but then the reflection at once came: did she really know how much the minister of war would dare if his rage was excited? El Boro, on two or three occasions, had shown Algiers that he held his life as lightly as though he valued it not at a pin's fee, and what would be more likely to enrage him to madness than this gross outrage?

The Frenchwoman had paid but little attention to Selim's story, and had laughed at the idea of El Boro daring to attempt to invade her palace; but, if the minister of war really had come—if he had come with armed men determined to force an entrance, and Gulnare knew well enough how blindly the average Moslem soldier obeyed the orders of his leader! No matter if she was the favorite of the Dey, in Algiers one might bask in the smiles of fortune one day and be driven forth in disgrace the next; if he had come, determined to have his daughter at any cost, how could she oppose him, what force had she to meet El Boro and his ruthless body-guard? for the personal following of the minister of war was noted throughout Algiers as being composed of desperadoes of every nation, men who boasted that they held their lives as lightly as they did the money in their purses.

There were fifteen or twenty men attached to the palace, supposed to be soldiers, for they wore swords and carried arms, but they were holiday troops, no match for El Boro's stalwart braves.

As cunning as she was bold, the Frenchwoman saw that if the armed force was indeed El Boro's men the time had come to act upon the maxim of the crafty Greek, Lysander, "When

the lion's skin falls short eke it out with the fox's."

She looked at Selim and nodded significantly toward the girl. The renegade was very pale, and no wonder; more than any one else he had reason to fear. Gulnare was a woman; El Boro might disdain to strike her; but for himself, he had no reason to expect mercy.

Selim approached the girl, and bowing low, requested her to follow him. Cleora complied, for she saw no other course open to her.

Selim conducted her to the apartment which she had previously occupied and then immediately returned to Gulnare.

"It is El Boro!" the Frenchwoman exclaimed. A second officer had recognized the minister of war. "What is to be done? Shall we admit him?"

"No, no!" cried the renegade, hastily. "Once he is inside our walls we are lost, if he come on hostile intent."

"He has only ten men with him!"

"We must refuse him admittance, and fire upon him if he insists." The Greek was pale and nervous as he gave this counsel. Never, in all his life, had he encountered greater peril.

"He will not dare to insist!" cried Gulnare, firing up at the very thought. "Am I a dog that El Boro dare to brave my anger?"

"Most gracious mistress, this Frank is a man terrible in anger, and if he believes that his daughter is detained here, he would not be apt to hesitate at any risk to release her."

"I have ordered my followers to arm themselves and prepare for a conflict, and now I in person will go to the wall and hold speech with him. By my life it will be an unlucky hour for El Boro when he dares to provoke my wrath. Come!"

Three steps the Frenchwoman took toward the door, the Greek following close upon her heels, when there came a sudden and violent crash, followed by a few scattering shots, and then a fierce and vindictive yell.

Gulnare paused in alarm, while the Greek became as pale as death.

"The ruffian! has he dared to use force?" the Frenchwoman cried, hardly able to believe that such could be the case.

The question was speedily answered.

Along the corridor sounded the noise of hurried footsteps; then the doors of the apartment were flung violently open and half-a-dozen of the attendants of the palace came rushing in, pale and breathless, while, hard at their heels, with leveled guns and brandished swords, followed El Boro and his rough-whiskered bodyguard.

El Boro, at the gate, had demanded admittance; the warder at first had attempted to parley with him, then grew insolent, relying upon his mistress's protection, and never believing for a single instant that El Boro would dare to brave the wrath of the Queen of the Harem; but the blood of the renegade Englishman was up, and in an instant he gave the word to advance. His bull-dogs liked no better fun; in a twinkling they had battered in the gate and were masters of the entrance, for the frail barrier which had interposed had never been framed to stand such rough usage.

Then, alarmed by the warder's cries, and suspecting that the intruders came on no friendly errand, some of the soldiers of Gulnare had attempted, by force of arms, to dispute the passage of the assailants, but El Boro and his rough blades had by a single charge sent them flying in terror and dismay, and, following close upon their heels, came with angry shouts and glittering weapons into the very presence of Gulnare.

The Frenchwoman was no coward, and being terribly enraged, too, at the boldness of the movement, she started forward and resolutely confronted the armed intruders, with the air of an empress.

"Halt, ruffians!" she cried. "What want you here with brandished weapons? Are you weary of life that by this bold outrage you provoke the anger of the Dey?"

"Your pardon, most noble lady, that I thus roughly and hastily intrude into your palace," El Boro replied, with stately politeness, "but I come in search of my daughter, who has been abducted from my apartments in the Kasbah, and who, I am informed, is now secreted here," and then at this point his eyes fell upon the Greek renegade skulking behind his mistress. In a second his rage flashed forth. "Yonder is the Greek!" he cried. "Down with him! Bind him hand and foot!"

Like eager dogs released from the leash and hounded upon their prey, the soldiers seized upon the Greek. Gulnare in vain attempted to

shield him. The rough fellows pushed her to one side as though she was naught but a lowly slave instead of being the favorite of Abou Hassan.

Selim was seized, bound, forced to his knees, and then over his head gleamed the curved sabers of the soldiers, ready at once to drink his blood.

Almost frantic with rage, the Frenchwoman gave vent to her indignation.

"Villains—monsters, do you dare? Oh! you shall pay dearly for this outrage—your heads shall roll in the dust—the Dey shall avenge me!"

"My daughter!" exclaimed El Boro, advancing with uplifted saber; and so fierce was the determination expressed upon his face that Gulnare, believing that her last hour had come, in terror fell upon her knees and threw up her hands to ward off the deadly stroke.

There was no mistaking El Boro's looks; blood was in his eyes.

"My daughter!" he cried again; "give her to me, or by my head I swear I'll let loose such a torrent of blood that all the waters of yonder ocean will never be able to wash out the stain."

"Yonder—in yonder apartment!" stammered Gulnare.

"Mercy, great lord!" cried Selim, in the same breath; "I but obeyed my orders—spare me!"

Contemptuously El Boro spurned the groveling wretch with his foot as he advanced rapidly toward the room indicated by the Frenchwoman. A slave in terror led the way, and soon the captive was gladdened by the sight of her stern sire.

With the maid El Boro returned to the main apartment.

"Woman!" cried the Englishman, addressing Gulnare, "for the first time in your life you have dared to openly brave me, and now you behold the consequences of the act. Let it be a warning to you; cross my path no more. Confine yourself to your intrigues; plot with the Holy Man as much as you please, but never again dare to use the sword of power, for if the chance of fortune places you a second time within my clutches, there will be a chance for our great master the Dey to choose another favorite. And as for you Greek slave, I scorn to strike him, worm that he is. Let him go!"

Obedient to the command the soldiers released their prisoner, and never in this world did mortal man thank his lucky star more fervently than Selim, at this unexpected piece of good fortune.

Without further words El Boro departed, his daughter and his rude soldiers bearing him company.

Mad with rage was the Frenchwoman at seeing El Boro thus carry matters with so high a hand.

"You must mount and ride at once to Algiers, Selim!" she cried. "See El Tokar and bid him come to me instantly. Say nothing of this scene except that El Boro has been here and taken away his daughter. Leave all the rest of the explanation to me!"

Selim started at once upon his mission, but a grave face he wore as he rode forth. He had escaped El Boro's anger once, but he was not eager to risk the chance a second time.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SECOND FAILURE.

"CALL in your murderers!"

Bold and ringing was the defiance of the captive, and for a moment El Tokar glared at him in silent anger. The Moor, with all his craft, was baffled and beaten at every point. He had expected by means of his threats to bring the prisoner to terms; he had thought that the appearance of the stranglers would at once have reduced the stranger to a condition of abject supplication, but instead of prayers for mercy he was met by a bold defiance.

"Reflect—reflect!" he cried. "By great Allah! I swear that your life hangs upon a thread!"

"Cut it then, and the quicker the better!" replied the captive, scornfully.

"Has life no charms for you—the grave no terrors?" asked the Holy Man, in amazement.

"Come—come! you're wasting time with your questions," the prisoner answered. "If you mean to kill, why kill and have done with it. If the gates of Paradise are yawning on their hinges to receive me, don't keep the dark angel waiting."

El Tokar was amazed.

What manner of man was this who made a jest of death and laughed in the face of the executioner!

Although cruel by nature, as such cowardly,

crafty fellows generally are, yet El Tokar hesitated to carry out his threats. So far his scheme had proven a total failure; the captive had baffled him at every point, and he had not gained a single bit of information.

And then, as the crafty Moslem, perplexed, cudgelled his brains to know what was best to do, an idea occurred to him.

What if this man whom he had taken to be the servant was in reality the master? It was not impossible—nay! it was more than likely from his bearing and manner. No one but a man used to command would be so defiant.

Good reasons had he then for not betraying the Greek pirate, since he himself was the Lion Captain!

El Tokar wondered that this idea had not occurred to him before; if his guess was correct, and he felt perfectly sure that it was, perhaps his plan might succeed with the other prisoner. At any rate it was worth a trial.

"I will give you time for reflection," he said, addressing the captive. "When you come to think upon the matter you will see that life is better than death, and that a man is a fool to throw away that which he can retain."

"A hundred years of solitary confinement would not change my opinion in regard to the matter!" the captive retorted.

"Ah, well; we will see," El Tokar remarked.

"A trial will do no harm, and if your spirit is so lusty and your will so stout, perhaps a little judicious dieting may help you. Bread and water, and a scanty supply of those two articles in the bargain, has been known to accomplish wonders. Starvation is a hard taskmaster, as you shall find before you are many days older."

And with this threat El Tokar withdrew.

"Starvation, eh?" muttered the prisoner, as the heavy iron door clanged to after the Holy Man. "By all that's evil, it will be a bad day for you, my greasy Moor, if you try that game on me and then trust yourself within my reach after. If I don't strangle you before your guards can save you then my name is not what it is!"

The Moor proceeded at once to the cell occupied by the other prisoner, and the jailer, undoing the fastenings, gave him admittance.

The captive was stretched at full length upon his pallet of straw, but as El Tokar entered, he raised himself upon his elbow and looked inquiringly at the Moor.

"Aha!" muttered the Holy Man, as he gazed upon the clear-cut, resolute features of the captive, "this is the man, sure enough! I was a fool to believe the other was the servant. How do you find yourself, my fine fellow?" he continued aloud, addressing the prisoner.

"So badly suited that I would be glad to change my quarters."

"Well, that you will do and very speedily."

"Yes?" replied the captive, in a tone of question.

"Your companion has confessed."

"Confessed what?" the man exclaimed, in a tone of surprise, and if his amazement was not real then he was a most excellent hand at deception.

"Why, that you are the Greek pirate, the Lion of the Sea."

"Oh, he has?" and the man, apparently, was not at all astounded at the intelligence.

"And that settles your fate."

"My fate?" and the captive stared with a blank face at the Moor.

"By his confession he sealed your doom. Behold!"

El Tokar waved his hand as a signal to the jailer, and that worthy, stepping to one side, allowed the stranglers to appear in the doorway.

The second captive was fully as strongly nerved as the first, for he never betrayed the slightest sign of agitation at the appearance of the muscular blacks with their silken cords of slaughter pendent from their arms.

The prisoner rose slowly to his feet.

"Death must come some time," he observed; "perhaps it is as well soon as later."

For the second time El Tokar was thoroughly astonished. Many brave and fearless men had he seen in his time, but never any that surpassed these two captives.

"You are prepared to die?" he questioned, in wonder.

"What does it matter whether a man is prepared or not, so long as his time has come and he cannot escape his fate?" replied the other, philosophically.

"But if there was a way to escape the death—"

"That depends a great deal upon what the way is," the prisoner answered, discussing the

matter as coolly as though he personally had no interest in the affair.

"Oh, it is as simple as simple can be!" El Tokar exclaimed, with a cunning leer, and he came quite near to the captive as he spoke.

"Simple things to one man are sometimes terribly hard to another."

"Your comrade has denounced you!"

"So you say," the captain retorted, and it was very plain from the way in which he spoke that he believed that the Holy Man lied.

"Oh, but he has!" El Tokar was quick to understand the captive's meaning. "I swear to you that he has!"

"You need not swear," the prisoner observed, dryly; "I would just as soon believe your word as your oath."

"But I think that he has lied in order to purchase his freedom."

"Men will do such things sometimes."

"Now I believe that you will speak the truth."

"You flatter me!" The captive was ironical. "Your comrade is willing to sacrifice you to save himself."

"It is the way of the world."

"I will give you a chance to get even with him."

"You are extremely kind!"

"Denounce him!" cried El Tokar, emphatically. "You are not the Lion Captain, but he is. Denounce him then, and by so doing save yourself."

"Yes; but why should you believe my word against his?"

"But will you not be able to present some proof that he is the Lion-head—some proof which cannot be denied?" asked the Holy Man, eagerly.

The prisoner laughed contemptuously in the very face of El Tokar, much to his amazement.

"Why do you laugh?" he asked.

"At your foolishness," responded the captive, in his sarcastic way. "My comrade has not confessed, for he has nothing to confess. I cannot denounce him, for I know nothing to denounce. You are playing us, the one against the other. You tried him first, failed, and now you come to me."

"Beware, beware!" exclaimed the Holy Man, in a rage at finding his cleverly-planned scheme so easily detected; "do not provoke my wrath or it may cost you dear!"

"Can you do more than kill?" questioned the captive, in scorn.

"But I can kill!" retorted El Tokar. "I have but to raise my finger and these black fellows will soon make an end of you."

"Why all this talk? Why not proceed to the last extremity at once?"

El Tokar hesitated; he hardly knew how to answer this plainly put question. He did not intend to put the prisoners to death; he had no authority to so dispose of them, but he had represented to the Dey that he felt sure he could, by the use of threats, backed by the presence of the stranglers, force the captives into a confession.

He had failed—most ingloriously failed, and now, what action to take he knew not.

And while he stood glowering in impotent rage at the defiant prisoner, the arrival of a new-comer interrupted the scene.

Into the cell strode the tall figure of the minister of war, El Boro. In his hand he bore a paper impressed with the royal seal. This he delivered to El Tokar who perused it with amazement.

"Retire and leave the prisoner to El Boro."

It was written by the Dey's hand and signed by his own royal signet.

The Holy Man wondered, for this scroll would seem to indicate that El Boro had been restored to favor, and, with the rise of El Boro's fortunes, fell his own, but he was too shrewd to complain.

He bowed low, bade the stranglers follow him and departed.

"Leave me alone with the prisoner," commanded El Boro to the jailer, and he at once followed El Tokar's example, clanging the heavy door to after him.

CHAPTER XIX.

EL BORO'S MISSION.

EL BORO and the captive thus left alone together, looked upon each other. Upon the face of the minister of war curiosity appeared, while the features of the prisoner were stern, and evidently he looked upon the other with no very friendly feeling.

El Boro was reputed to be extremely sharp-eyed, and at the first glance he believed that he

had detected the truth in regard to the captive. This was the Lion Captain—the master, not the servant.

The minister of war was the first to speak.

"You are the Lion of the Sea?" he said.

"Prove it," replied the other, laconically.

"Nay, I care not to do that," El Boro answered. "It is enough for me to know the truth. Look not upon me in the light of an enemy, for I am no foe to you, but rather the best friend you have in all this wide world."

The captive looked incredulous.

"It is the truth," the other continued; "and my mission here to-day is to do you a service."

"A service!" demanded the captive, incredulously.

"Yes, as you will find before this interview is ended. Dismiss all doubt and give me in its place perfect trust. You know me, do you not?"

"El Boro."

"Right! El Boro, the English renegade, in the old-time called Thomas Craven, Earl of Crofton and knight of Engleboro."

The prisoner cast a sharp, quick glance at the face of the speaker, as though he was in doubt as to the meaning of the speech.

"Oh, you know me well enough, although I confess I am somewhat puzzled as to how you gained your knowledge," El Boro continued. "And then, too, how comes it that you were so eager after my daughter—how happened it that you knew anything of her at all, and why did you so persistently attempt to inflame her against me?"

"You are speaking in riddles, and losing your time," the prisoner replied, carelessly. "What know I, either of you or of your daughter?"

"Do you know where she is now?" asked El Boro, abruptly, paying no attention at all to the question of the other.

"No, how should I?"

"Your capture on the beach threw her again into the hands of the men from whom you rescued her, and the leader of these abductors was Selim, the Greek renegade, the trusted servitor of Guldare, the Queen of the Harem."

Despite his iron-like nerves and wonderful habit of self-control, a shade passed over the face of the captive. Cleora in the hands of the merciless Frenchwoman was bad news indeed.

"And you, who appear to be so well acquainted with all the secret intrigues of the court, you of course can guess why Guldare should dare to brave my rage by thus forcibly abducting my child."

"Perhaps," replied the other, evidently much affected by the news.

"The riddle is easily read!" continued El Boro, in his cold, mechanical way. "Guldare feared that Cleora would prove to be a dangerous rival to her. The beauty of the Frenchwoman is on the wane; she was afraid that the fickle fancy of the unstable Dey would be captivated by the fresh young face of Cleora; at any risk she was determined to remove the girl from her path. This greasy impostor, who makes a trade of his religion, and who calls himself the Holy Man, is no doubt in league with her. Either through bribery of my attendants, or through some secret passage, unknown to me, by means of which access can be gained to my apartments, Cleora was drugged and forcibly abducted. Now then, supposing that I am not strong enough to pluck her from the Frenchwoman's clutches, to what fate is she doomed?"

"Death!" replied the captive, in a low, deep voice, evidently much affected.

"You are right; unless wrested from Guldare's power, there is no hope for her."

"No, no hope."

"But the means of rescue are near at hand. Despite all the precautions that Guldare took to keep me in ignorance of the part which she played in the seizure of my jewel, thanks to the lucky chance which sent you to the rescue, her captivity became known to the soldiers of the escort troop. Not one, but three of the troopers came to me with the tidings, for it is a motto in Algiers that El Boro pays with a princely hand the men who serve him. When the news reached my ears, all I had to do was to seek the Dey and say to him, 'Royal master, I have a daughter—a fresh, fair young English girl, whom I have brought over the seas from the Frankish land expressly to serve your princely pleasure; Guldare, jealous of the maid, has stolen her away.' What think you would have been his answer?"

"He would at once have ordered you to bring her back."

"Yes, at one single stroke I would have avenged the insult put upon me, and dealt the woman, who is my deadly foe, a fearful blow."

"And did you so?"

"No!" cried El Boro, quickly. "To this present moment the tyrant of Algiers knows not that such a maid as Cleora lives upon the earth. I took my own followers—my own bull-dogs, and with the strong hand of power I tore Guldare's prey from her grasp. Complain, she dares not, for that would reveal her own treachery to the Dey and bring to his knowledge the existence of Cleora. Now then, if I designed to sell my girl to the tyrant, as you have boldly charged, and thus cement my own hold on power, why have I acted as I have?"

"The riddle is too deep for me; I cannot solve it."

"I can easily explain it. I do not intend to sell Cleora to the Dey; I have a better fate in store for her than to become the slave of this vile, fickle-minded tyrant, who, misled by his ignorant and bigoted counselors, imagines that all Europe trembles at his nod, and that he is absolute master over both land and sea, although from that dream he is likely to be awakened soon, and rudely, too, for Blake, the world-renowned English admiral, with a powerful fleet, is already off the coast, and the thunder of his guns, tumbling the city of Algiers to ruins, will soon be heard. I am playing for a great stake, and I come to you to offer both fame and fortune."

"Fame and fortune to me?" cried the captive, in vast astonishment, which was clearly unfeigned.

"Yes, to you," El Boro repeated, firmly. "Already you have made a name upon the water second to no man the keel of whose ship has ever cut the waters of the Mediterranean. In single fight, and against overwhelming odds, you vanquished the best captain that Algiers boasts—Ali, of the Blue Beard; took his ship and sent him home, dripping like a drowned rat, to tell the story of your triumph. You are the very man I want; you love my girl, Cleora, and she, I fancy, already returns your passion, and I, her father, come to you to offer not only her beautiful self, but a throne besides."

"A throne!" cried the prisoner, hardly able to believe that he had heard aright, reluctant to give credence to the evidence of his own ears.

"Yes; my hand can give it to you."

The captive gazed earnestly at El Boro, and upon his face a strong expression of doubt appeared.

The Englishman, skillful at reading faces, understood the meaning of the look at once.

"You doubt me," he said.

"To speak truth I do, and I fear a trap, too."

"I will soon remove all doubts and fears!" exclaimed El Boro, confidently. "A year ago I was high in favor with the Dey, for I had completely reorganized his army and placed it upon a better footing than it had ever been before. The navy, too, I had entirely remodeled and made it what it now is, far superior to that of any other African power; but when my work was done, Abou Hassan, ever jealous and suspicious, began to fear that I had grown too great, had acquired too much power, and he listened to the croaking of jealous rivals who represented to him that it was not wise to allow a stranger—a renegade—to gain so much popularity, and so, during the past year, little by little, he has encroached upon my privileges until now, at last, I find myself a minister of war, with no authority over the army—the commander of the navy, yet deprived of the right to command the sailing of a single ship. And how strong in power is the man who has dared to put these affronts upon me? He has but the shadow of an army at his back, and both officers and men, badly paid, badly treated, would be glad at any moment to transfer their swords to a more liberal master. The fleet is the same. Two or three, perhaps, like Ali, of the Blue Beard, who have acquired riches in the Dey's service, might be depended upon to remain true to him until they discovered the strength of the revolt, and then they, too, would come over. Everything is ripe for the movement, and the English fleet of Blake, now so rapidly approaching with the design of attacking Algiers, will be a most important ally. The Dey is determined to defy the power of England. Blake has orders to attack the city if he thinks that it is advisable, and most surely he will do so unless the Dey releases his prisoners and pays the money demanded by England for damages. When the citizens of Algiers find their houses tumbling about their ears, most certain is it that they will roundly curse Abou Hassan, and denounce him as the author of the mischief, although they are now blatant in defiance. That is the auspicious moment to seize upon. Everything will be arranged in advance for the outbreak; we'll seize upon the palace and the citadel simultane-

ously, tear the Dey from his chair of state and thrust him into a dungeon, as his father thrust his brother when he seized upon the throne, long ago. I have hoodwinked the tyrant completely. He is eaten up with curiosity to know who and what you are, and I procured this interview with you by representing to him that I could most certainly succeed in inducing you, either by threats or fair promises, to reveal yourself."

The captive for a moment or two looked at El Boro, a strange expression upon his face; then he spoke:

"From what you have said I should be led to believe that you know, and yet I do not think you do."

"You are wrong, for my spies have served me well," El Boro replied. "You are Hamet, the rightful heir to the throne of Algiers!"

CHAPTER XX.

TRICK FOR TRICK.

THE prisoner burst into a loud laugh, much to the astonishment of the minister of war, who could not see any cause for mirth.

"Oh, I am Hamet then, the rightful heir to the throne of Algiers!" he exclaimed. "And if I am Hamet will you tell me who Hamet is, and how comes it that he has any claim to the throne of Abou Hassan?"

El Boro frowned; this levity and questioning did not please him, but he believed that it was only a trick on the part of the prisoner to try his knowledge, and so he answered:

"You are of the elder branch of the family, Abou Hassan of the younger; his father seized upon your father's birthright and intended to slay you, but your mother, who was a Greek woman, managed to save you from his power, and fled with you to her own land, where you were reared. In time you took to the sea, became the Lion Captain, and did all in your power to injure the man who had usurped your place."

"Ah, that was the reason I wore the lion's head then—to escape recognition until the favorable moment arrived for me to assert my rights."

El Boro looked at the speaker in wonder; was the man losing his senses to talk thus strangely?

"By my faith!" the captive continued, "if I were Hamet, the man you take me to be, I would jump eagerly at the chance you offer, for I will own to you, frankly, that I do fancy Cleora, whom I first met two years ago at San Tropez, and whose image has remained imprinted on my heart ever since. A wife and a throne at a single bound!—it is not every day in this life that a man has such an offer, and right sorry am I that I am not the man you take me to be."

"You are not Hamet?" cried El Boro, in astonishment.

"No, I am not."

"Your companion then is—I am wrong—he is the Lion Captain?"

"No, I am the man that wore the head and bore the name. It was I that fought and conquered Ali of the Blue Beard, yet, for all that I am not Hamet; I am not an Algerine by birth; I am not the son of a Greek woman, and I have no more claim to the throne of Algiers than I have to the chair of the Prophet at Mecca."

El Boro's face fully displayed the disappointment which he felt at this unexpected revelation.

"What is the meaning of this riddle?" he cried. "My spies, who seldom deceive me, assured me that the Lion Captain was Hamet."

"The Lion Captain might have been the man you speak of, but he who wore the lion's head on the day of the fight with Ali was no other than myself, and I am not Hamet, and never was."

"But who then are you?"

"A simple soldier of fortune who owes all he is in this world to his own good right arm."

"Assume then the place of Hamet, since, as I gather from your words, he lives not; take his name and grasp the fortune which awaits the bold hand and stout heart."

"Half the spoils I will gladly take," the prisoner replied—"your daughter, Cleora, if the girl is willing to link her fate with mine, and if you contrive to arrange my escape from this dungeon I will pledge you my word to do my best to aid the English fleet to batter down the walls of Algiers if the English Admiral, Sir Francis Blake, will accept of the poor assistance of my dainty craft."

"Be it so: I will procure your release, but it must be done by craft and stealthily accomplished. As to Cleora, the girl shall be free to choose. I had designed her as a bait to lure on a daring man to seize Algiers; but, renegade and traitor to my country as I have been, I am

not all bad. In my heart there has always lingered a father's tenderness for his child, although you did not give me credit for it, and believed that I brought my girl across the waters solely to sell her to this dusky tyrant; but I trust now you will believe that although I intended to use her as a tool to accomplish my own ends, yet I had not designed her for quite so bad a fate as you believed."

Before the captive could make reply to this statement there came upon the air the sound of many feet in the corridor without; the door of the cell was rudely opened, and the Dey of Algiers, backed by the wily El Tokar and a score or more of armed men, appeared in the entrance.

The face of Abou Hassan was inflamed with anger, and he shook his fist fiercely at El Boro.

"Dog of a traitor!" he cried, in wrath, "vile renegade! outcast wretch! lying in terror from your own land—from the vengeance of your enraged countrymen, is it thus that you repay the protection and shelter that I have bestowed upon you? You would strip the crown from my head and tear the scepter from my hand, and now I in turn will strike your treacherous hand from your body and your head from the neck! Dog! I knew that you were a traitor, only waiting for an opportunity to do mischief; and when you, with crafty thought, craved for an interview with this captive, I mistrusted your object; I granted you your wish, for it was the very chance I sought. This is the 'ear' cell, the ceiling is constructed like an ear; even a whisper given to the air here is instantly conducted to the watching room above. There are some secrets in the palace that have not been confided to your care! I have heard every word that has been spoken, and with your own lips you have pronounced your doom. You will snatch me from my throne and thrust me into a cell! I will snatch you from the world and thrust you into a tomb, and that so quickly that small time will be given you for either prayers or curses, and this English beauty, whom you have kept so closely hidden from my eyes, she shall be one of the jewels of my harem! Seize him! away with him! Strike off his head at once! El Tokar, be that your charge!"

In a trice El Boro was seized and bound. He did not attempt to resist; indeed, it would have been madness against such overpowering numbers.

"Away with him!" again shrieked the enraged Moor. "Bring his head, El Tokar, or yours shall answer for it!"

"Blake and the English fleet will avenge my death, and when he rains hot shot upon Algiers and the city is in flames, from the grave will I look back and laugh with glee!" cried the renegade, as they bore him away to die.

Never before had any of those present seen Abou Hassan give way to such wild and fearful rage. He seemed like a man fast verging into madness.

"Withdraw, all of you!" he cried, after the soldiers, headed by El Tokar, had borne the minister of war away. The attendants were quick to obey, for they knew the nature of their master well, and in his present state it was dangerous to trifle with him.

With his own hands the Dey closed the heavy iron door, and then he approached and looked eagerly into the face of the prisoner, who bore the scrutiny without flinching, although utterly in the dark as to the reason that impelled the ruler of Algiers to the act.

"Was El Boro mad that he took you to be my cousin?" the Dey cried. "Why, there is not a single feature in your face that resembles him."

"I haven't any idea why he believed that I was Hamet," the captive answered.

"He was mad—mad to injure me. It is a lie that Hamet lives; he died, long ago, and if he were living not all the powers of the world combined could shake me from the throne of Algiers!" he declared, arrogantly. "And now, my bold fellow, what fate do you choose? Will you let the silken cord of the stranglers encircle your neck—will you be tied up in a bag and be cast into the sea—give your neck to the keen edge of the ax, or walk forth a free man to take your place on the deck of one of my ships and help to give battle to these English bull-dogs who are barking so loudly? Come! I'll make you a fair offer. I will forget the past—forget that you destroyed the best frigate that I had in my navy if you and your companion will enter my service."

"Put me on board of the ship and when we are at sea on the blue water you shall have my answer," the captive replied, promptly.

"By Allah! you choose wisely, and if you

fight for me as well as you fought for yourself you shall not regret having entered my service."

"Stay a moment. I have not agreed to enter your service yet," continued the other. "I said that on the open sea I would give you my answer."

"Oh, you will consent," replied the Dey, with the faint ugly smile peculiar to him, which so strongly resembled a tiger's grin. "You will consent," he repeated, "because I will give my officers orders that if you refuse to fight when the enemy beats to quarters to tie you to one of the guns and blow you into atoms."

"Quite a convincing argument," observed the captive, in no wise appalled by the threat.

"In an hour you shall be on board; the English fleet is reported off our shores, and I intend to give them battle the moment they draw near. This great captain, Blake, comes to beard me in Algiers, but I will meet him on the sea, and in fair and open battle destroy his fleet."

"How astonished he will be," remarked the other, and so quietly delivered was the sarcasm that the brutal and ignorant Moor never observed it.

Abou Hassan summoned his guards, gave his orders, and in obedience thereto the two prisoners were at once taken from the prison and placed on board of a frigate in the harbor commanded by Ali Blue-Beard, who grinned ferociously as the two came up the side of the vessel.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ATTACK.

THE Dey returned to his own apartments and at once sent an officer to bring the daughter of the dead El Boro from his apartments in the palace. The doom of the minister of war had been immediately carried out; the keen-edged ax had severed the head from the body within ten minutes after the order had been given.

In a foreign land, afar from the country which he had betrayed, the bold and daring spirit of the Englishman had found rest at last.

After the departure of the officer in search of the girl, Abou Hassan waited in ill-concealed impatience. His imagination had been inflamed by the accounts given of her, and therefore great was his rage when the messenger returned and announced that she was not to be found. He at once had all the attendants of El Boro summoned, and one and all stoutly denied all knowledge of the girl's departure. Among his followers the minister of war had had one faithful friend, and the moment he had heard that El Boro had been seized and was being led to execution, he at once hurried to the daughter, told of the danger which impended, and guided her, all muffled up like a female slave, to the house of the English ambassador.

That gentleman, having delivered the defiance of England to the Dey, had demanded his passports and was preparing to embark on a ship which he had chartered to convey him to the English fleet, now momentarily expected to have in sight.

To the representative of England the faithful servant told the story of El Boro's downfall and the claim that the dead man's daughter had upon him for protection, and the envoy of Great Britain at once promised to be to her as a father and to see her safely conveyed to England.

The ambassador embarked, and the vessel, getting under way, ran past the wall, under the frowning Algerian guns, with the English flag displayed at her peak, and then, getting clear of the harbor, made for the blue water outside, heading toward the north-west, from which direction the fleet of Admiral Blake was expected.

As soon as the Dey discovered that he could not gain any information from the attendants, he sent for the chief of his spies, and this sagacious individual at once suggested an examination of the palace guards, and so after three or four hours' delay, it was at last discovered that a veiled woman had left the palace in company with one of El Boro's men. This fact ascertained, the spy chief suggested that the girl, being English, would most probably seek the protection of the English ambassador.

The Dey was quick to act upon the idea. An armed force was dispatched to search the envoy's house, and the officer in command had strict injunctions to bring the girl, if he found her, even over the dead body of England's representative. Little regard had this ruthless ruler of Algiers for the law of nations which renders the house of an ambassador sacred from search, except in criminal cases.

But, as we have stated, the bird had flown, and when the tidings were brought to the Dey his anger flamed out afresh, and he swore by his beard that he would retake the fugitive at any cost.

So Ali, of the Blue Beard, was directed to make sail with all possible haste in pursuit of the ambassador's transport.

But the Englishman had nearly two hours' start, and although Ali's vessel was by far the best sailer, yet the adage that a stern chase is a long chase proved to be true in this instance, for it was fully five hours ere Ali came near enough to use his guns upon the fugitive; and then a strange sail, coming rapidly down from the windward, seemed likely to prove a foe, rather than a friend.

Ali thought that he recognized the craft, as she came up, capably handled, and in a manner which plainly indicated that her sailing-master knew his business.

Ali had given up his chase of the ambassador's transport and was maneuvering to meet the stranger, who evidently was bent on mischief.

The two prisoners—the Lion-head and his companion—stood together on the quarter-deck, and although their faces betrayed not their emotions, yet it was plain from the sparkle in their eyes that both of them had recognized the strange craft.

Ali turned abruptly to them.

"You know her, eh?"

"It is the Lion," was the answer.

And then, as if the noble craft had heard her name pronounced by her master's lips, a puff of white smoke came from her side and the heavy ball of her long gun bored an ugly hole through the side of the Algerine vessel, just at the water-line.

In hot rage the pasha swore:

"By Allah!" he cried, "I've half a mind to string you up to the yard-arm as a warning to this rascal!" and as he spoke he shook his clenched fist in the face of the prisoner.

"A sail—a sail—a fleet!" came loudly from the look-outs at the bow, and there, sure enough, with their spars rising dark against the western horizon, were ten or fifteen heavy crafts.

"It is the fleet of Blake!" cried the Lion Captain. "Now, Ali, look to yourself, or England's power will pluck you by your blue beard until your chin is sore!"

The hand of the pasha sought the handle of his saber, intent upon taking immediate vengeance upon the bold speaker, but, ere he could pluck forth the weapon, with a terrible buffet the Lion Captain laid the Moor prostrate upon the deck and then both of the prisoners, before the astonished crew could collect their senses and avenge the insult offered to their chief, leaped boldly over the quarter into the sea, and the vessel which was running at full speed before the wind soon left them behind.

A volley of musketry the Algerines fired after the fugitives, but the balls glanced harmlessly over the surface of the waves, the swimmers diving like wild ducks the instant they saw the flash of the guns.

The Algerines could not put their craft about to pursue the fugitives, for the Lion was bearing down right upon their quarter, already having them at a disadvantage, and it would have been mere madness to have "gone about."

The Lion altered her course slightly, so as to pick up the two men struggling bravely in the water, and passing across the stern of the Algerine sent a well-aimed ball at her which raked the decks, dismounted three guns and killed or disabled a dozen men.

The two were none the worse for their bath, and after donning dry suits came again on deck and the Lion Captain took command.

The Algerine had taken advantage of the action to go about and now was endeavoring to beat back to the harbor of Algiers.

The Lion was by far the better sailer, though, and soon recovered the slight advantage which she had lost, and then came a game in which the Algerine craft suffered terribly. Keeping well off, the Lion pounded her with her heavy gun, every shot, almost, telling, while from the inferior ordnance with which she was equipped the Moor was unable to retaliate with any severity.

The deck of Ali's craft was slippery with blood and the crew were almost on the verge of mutiny, for slaves fight not like free men, and naught but Ali's threats that he would slay the first man that flinched from his duty kept the men to their guns.

Slowly the line of the coast grew more and more distinct.

"Courage!" cried the Algerine commander;

"a mile more and we shall be free from this devil!"

But, hardly had he finished his speech when a well-aimed shot cut away his mizzen-mast, which, going by the board, reduced the Moorish craft to the condition of a helpless hulk.

A torrent of curses rolled from the lips of the Algerine. In truth it was hard; this was the second time that Ali had suffered at the hands of the Lion of the Sea.

The victorious craft was quick to improve the advantage which she had gained. Under full sail she bore down and raked the Algerine fore and aft.

Feeble indeed was the fire the Moor returned, and a loud wail went up from the lips of the crew—a cry to surrender.

"Never!" cried Pasha Blue Beard, in utter desperation; "let no man dare to lay a hand upon that flag. We'll go down with our colors flying!"

But, even slaves will turn if the punishment be too great, and the crew of the frigate were sick of slaughter.

A solitary shot—fired no one knew by whose hand—struck the Algerine commander full in the center of the forehead. The saber dropped from his grasp; he clutched convulsively at the air and then fell lifeless to the deck.

For a moment the crew glared upon each other, and then, as another death-dealing ball from the enemy came tearing its way through the bulwarks, the shock roused them from the stupor into which they had fallen, and three or four simultaneously rushed to the flag and hauled it down.

A ringing cheer, which resounded over the waters, went up from the deck of the Lion, which was now bearing down upon the Algerine's quarter, with intent to grapple and board her, as the Crescent flag came sliding down.

The Lion came up alongside and the unknown, at the head of a boarding-crew, came on board.

The Algerine ship had commenced to fill, having been badly injured at the water-line by the heavy fire of the Lion, and as the Lion Captain stepped on the deck his experienced eye at once perceived that the frigate would soon sink beneath the waves.

"To the boats, men!" he commanded. "I give you your lives; pull at once for Algiers and warn Abou Hassan that, with the rising of another sun, we'll batter his city about his ears!"

CHAPTER XXII.

"ENGLAND EXPECTS EVERY MAN TO DO HIS DUTY."

A RESTLESS night indeed the Algerine monarch passed after having received the warning of the Lion of the Sea.

Who and what was this mysterious man, and how came it that he joined hands so readily with the English fleet, as his words indicated that he had.

Was he indeed Hamet, the outcast heir? Had he a claim to the throne of Algiers, and had he gladly joined hands with the Turkish foe so that he might have their aid in his endeavor to seat himself in the place of power?

Few were the hours indeed that the Moorish Dey devoted to sleep that night, or, for that matter, few within the city slept.

The English fleet, piloted by the Lion craft, had come up in battle array, and, with springs upon their cables, all ready for action were riding at anchor just outside the harbor.

It was plain that with the coming of the morn a terrible fight would ensue, and although the Moors had arrogantly boasted, with all their usual pride, that the fleet existed not that could harm their city, yet now, as they gazed upon the powerful men-of-war riding at anchor just beyond cannon-shot, and each and every craft with the exception of the Lion, displaying the well-known ensign of old England, mistress of the sea, a dim foreboding struck them that Algiers was about to encounter the brunt of the most severe attack that she had ever experienced since the Barbarossa brothers, the fierce and bloody-handed pirates seized upon the throne and unfurled their standard upon which hostility to all the world was emblazoned.

Even El Tokar, the most arrogant of all, began to shrewdly suspect that it would be far cheaper and better to yield to the English demands than to risk the peril of the fight, but for his life he dared not say so, for Abou Hassan was absolutely bent upon war.

"We'll give these Frankish dogs a lesson that shall send them howling to their homes!" he declared.

All night long the Moors worked to prepare for the coming struggle, and with the appearance of the dawn, which came bright and beautiful, they gazed anxiously out to sea where rode the fleet of the enemy.

It was not for the first time that morning that the people of the city of Algiers had risen from their beds and looked upon a foe in battle array.

Fierce attacks had Algiers withstood, and therefore it was not without foundation their arrogant boast that the captain did not exist who could compel them to sue for quarter.

Bright and early the Englishmen beat to quarters, and with the rising of the sun the attack began.

Contrary to all recognized rules of battle the fight was waged by the English commander, and the Algerines, taken completely by surprise, found that all their preparations had been in vain.

It was the custom of the age in the case of a naval attack upon land batteries to warp the vessels in within range, put springs upon their cables and there remain stationary until they had either silenced the shore defenses or had suffered so severely themselves as to be obliged to retire. And therefore, relying upon this fact, the Moors had trained every gun to bear upon the exact spot where they expected the vessels of the enemy to ride at anchor, and in these days it was no easy matter to alter the position of a gun, all the modern appliances for that purpose being unknown.

Admiral Blake, the English commander, was a captain far in advance of the generation in which he lived, and he adopted a maneuver which completely upset all the plans of the Moors.

Instead of coming into line one by one and at a certain stationary range opening fire, he ran up the signal, which, in an after age was to become famous, "England expects every man to do his duty," and then crowding on all sail, came round in a sweeping circle, the Lion in the lead, close in to the land right under the batteries, so that their fire passed harmlessly through the light top spars, and as each ship passed it poured an almost point-blank fire, not a pistol-shot away from the forts, into the land defenses, then standing out to sea passed around the circle to repeat the operation.

It took just a single hour to silence every gun in the Moorish defenses; at the end of that time the forts were a mass of smoking ruins; the defenders had fled in dismay, scores of them having been slaughtered at their guns; the vessels in the harbor were blazing, the city was on fire in a dozen different places, the ships having used red-hot balls; in brief, Algiers was helpless, at the mercy of the foe.

The white flag was run up in a terrible hurry from the most conspicuous point, and as this evidence of victory appeared, a ringing cheer came rolling over the waters from the victors.

The haughty Algerines cried for quarter! The Lion stood boldly into the harbor, followed by the rest of the fleet and anchored off the mole, their double-shotted guns bearing full on the defenseless city.

But there was no danger of further resistance. Algiers was prostrate at the feet of the conquerors.

Abou Hassan, now thoroughly alarmed for the safety of the city, and believing that the English meant to complete their work by utterly destroying the town, took a boat, and with some of his chief officers, came in person to beg for mercy and arrange terms of surrender.

The defeated Dey was now as humble as he had been insolent.

The Lion was the first vessel that the barge reached, and as the boat came up to her, intending to pass by and proceed to one of the English ships beyond, a file of marines appeared at the side with leveled guns menacing the Moors.

"A flag of truce!" cried the Dey, in person, pointing to where it floated from the stern; "we wish to arrange terms; Algiers surrenders."

"Come on board!" was the answer; and the Algerines obeyed, although unwillingly, for it was gall and wormwood for the Dey to tread the deck of the Greek pirate.

And as the Dey ascended to the deck of the Lion, the English ambassador, accompanied by Cleora, made his appearance on the other side, having just come by gig from his own vessel.

Abou Hassan stared in astonishment at the girl, for, seeing her in company with Sir Edward, he recognized at once that she was the maid, the daughter of El Boro.

On the quarter-deck of the craft stood the Lion Captain, not arrayed now in the seaman

garb of the Greek pirate, but resplendent in an English uniform.

Aboo Hassan was amazed as was also the girl, for it was plainly apparent that the unknown was a man of rank.

"Does Algiers surrender, or shall I tumble your walls down about your ears?" the unknown asked.

"I seek the commander of the English fleet," the Dey answered, sulkily, for the tone of the man whom he had so completely at his mercy only a short time ago cut him to the quick.

"You are addressing him, sir," said one of the English officers, pointing to the Lion Captain. "This is Sir Francis Blake, Lord High Admiral of England."

The Dey could only stare, utterly amazed, while a joyful look came upon the features of the girl.

"It amazes you, eh?" exclaimed Blake, with a laugh. "Well, your mind is easy upon one point, Hamet, the Greek pirate, the Lion of the Sea, is dead; you need have no fear of his attempting to dispute with you the title of the dirty little throne of Algiers. Cruising in advance of my fleet, in one of my lightest vessels, Hamet overhauled me, and mistaking my craft for a merchantman, sought to capture it, and the result was that his error cost him both his ship and his life, for when he grappled me, I boarded him, instead of his boarding me, and on his own deck mastered him. And from the papers of the Greek pirate, lady, he continued, turning to Cleora, 'I discovered all the facts relating to you, for this Hamet had his spies in Algiers, and he designed to seize you and so force your father, El Bor, to lend him a hand in his design upon the throne. He little guessed that your father had in his mind the same idea. I was always fond of an adventure, and so determined to assume, for a while, the disguise of the Lion-head, and save you, if I could, from the fate for which I believed your father destined you, for I was well acquainted, by reputation, with your unfortunate sire, and thus it happened that I became interested in this strange affair.'"

A few more words and our story is told. Algiers, completely humiliated, and utterly at the mercy of her conqueror, gladly made peace on the Englishman's own terms.

The Dey made a demand for the person of Cleora, claiming that her father had been his subject.

"Once an Englishman, always an Englishman," replied Blake, tartly, "but she is free to go where she will; not a single strand will I lay in her way. Make your choice, lady; is it to England with me, or will you accept the protection of Algiers?"

Simple were the words, plain the question, but there was a certain something in his voice that made the girl blush crimson.

"I am of England, and would sooner die than stay in this vile land, with these barbarians for companions."

The Dey departed in wrath, he had received his answer, and so, had Sir Francis Blake; Cleora was his, despite of all the world, and in the years to come, when golden happiness crowned their wedded life in Merrie England, neither one regretted the strange adventures in the southern ocean, when to win a bridle England's proudest admirals great a naval commander as the stout little island ever boasted, disguised his identity, and outwitted the Algerine in the strange mask of the Lion of the Sea, and by his own brave deeds won the Lady of San Tropez.

THE END.

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